FRANK AMOR.

FRANK AMOR:

A Novel.

BY

JAJABEE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

"Love hath no wherefore."

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FRANK AMOR.

CHAPTER I.

THE scene which I took part in at this time was, indeed, a very impressive one, and will, to my certain affliction, haunt my memory for ever. The lamplight had grown feeble, and served to make dimly visible the two malevolent faces, staring with deeply wicked interest upon me; while, crowding the tables in the gloom-oppressed chamber, the ever-present dead company of uncouth birds and beasts, with fixed, glistening eyes, seemed to glare with a ghostly, intelligent wonder. They seemed to protest the vanity of life. While I was under the dread influence of that memorable scene, I imagined those live-seeming effigies silently expressing to each other marvel that man, with all his high intelligence and moral discrimination, should yet continue to go on hoodwinking himself with the utterly

vain hope that he may succeed in increasing his happiness by means of unrighteousness.

My two ill-wishing companions were now evidently at a loss to determine what step to take towards me, and I was about to challenge them to openly declare their intention, in regard to the calumnious charge which they had brought to bear upon me, when the room door was pushed open, and in the gloomy space appeared the hunchback, who, in harsh accents, announced that the police officers had completed their task, and desired a short interview with my uncle.

"Let them come in here," returned my uncle, nervously.

"Then I shall go out," cried the Captain. "I have already declared my disapproval of the way in which your delicate bit of business is being carried on. Now, seeing you still disposed to invite police interference in the matter, I shall take my leave of you, with the intimation that I shall not trouble you again until the present difficulty between you and your crack-brained nephew is amicably settled."

The prudent man of war upon this announcement was proceeding to effect his instant retreat, and had nearly reached the door, when

he stopped short on hearing my uncle shriek out that he believed the deserter was actuated to flight solely by pusillanimous personal considerations.

I laughed heartily, despite my doleful case, to see the curious effect produced by my uncle's taunt upon the retreating Captain. Upon the instant of receiving the insult of his ungenerous ally, he stood still for a few seconds, as if estimating its full import. Wheeling round, with every feature distorted with wrath, he strode back, and, bending over my uncle, roared,—

"Mark my words, friend Gall, never again presume to take with me the liberty you have done now, for if you do so you will, I promise you, bitterly regret it. You, sir, like the most of your brother-scholars, take your ideas of the world after the manner of some old spider in a dusty web, which, having successfully tackled a few poor flies, flatters himself into the belief that he is fit to cope with any other insect out, and only finds out his mistake when he rushes at a strong wasp, and gets probed for his ignorant impertinence."

"Oh, don't, Captain!" quailed my relative, in dire alarm, glancing fearfully at his warner's uplifted hand, with the thought, no doubt, that

a practical illustration was about to be given of the parable advanced.

"I warn you once again to amend your present line of conduct," continued the Captain, impressively, slapping his open palm forcibly down upon the arm of the shrinking creature's chair. "Sowing the wind is the game you are playing now, and that, let me remind you, leads to reaping of the whirlwind."

"Alas!" piteously whined my unhappy relative, "I have not a friend in the world to help me in my present need."

The Captain, looking contemptuously upon the complaining, spiritless creature, addressed to him these harrowing words,—

"It would almost appear that to befriend you is to quarrel with Heaven."

At this time Stoat again entered the room, accompanied by the two police officers. On the appearance of the official intruders, the Captain, I remarked, immediately withdrew to a side of the chimney-piece which was enveloped in semi-darkness, where he stood resting his elbow upon the shelf, with the evident desire of remaining perfectly neutral in the forthcoming interview. My uncle was now, I could plainly perceive, suffering keenly in his nervous system, and my professional experience

enabled me presently to detect in him certain symptoms betokening that he was afflicted, not only with positive physical anguish, but with that far greater misery which sometimes visits a timorous soul dwelling within a diseased body, being the constant apprehension of a sudden death.

"If I may be so free, sir," remarked the chief officer, looking with concern at the master of the house, "I should say you ain't quite well at the present moment."

I silently gave credit to the officer for the remarkably delicate manner in which he expressed his concern, seeing the features of my relative's caso were a sea-green complexion, and a palsied trembling in his every limb. I chanced at this time to look at the Captain, when that rude individual was so free as to return me a knowing wink. I plainly understood the meaning of this man's sign; but as I was far from inclined to recompose my friendship with him, I returned his impertinence with a cold stare.

"My master is a little agitated," hastily remarked the major-domo; and presently added, with a gently declining tone of voice, "that is all that ails him."

This man could not but have known that his

master was then truly near resigning his very life; but the words of assurance were, no doubt, prompted by some former experience of their value. Stoat, at the time of making his quieting remark, addressed to the officers a significant sign, indicative of his desire for them to turn their eyes off the poor, gasping form on the chair; and, curiously enough, no sooner were the terms of the secret monition carried into effect, than the wretched patient rallied at an astonishingly quick rate.

The first use of recovered confidence made by my uncle was to follow up his interrupted malignant pursuit against me. This I had expected, and indeed I had resolved that the quarrel between us should be proceeded with to a decisive issue.

"Well, my friends, what is your report?" said he, addressing the police agents.

Extreme feebleness characterized the accents of his voice, and surely it went far to prove that the spirit of rancour in him was beyond all power, save that of death, to subdue.

"We have turned over the young gentleman's things, sir," replied the chief police agent in the professional tone peculiar to his class.

Then he went on to relate that he and

his comrade had discovered in my portmanteau a small, velvet-lined, leathern box containing gold and silver coins of Indian mintage, and also several strips of palm-leaves tied together into parcels, and each strip engraven with a curious character, which character, being in reality Sanscrit, was absurdly described by the policeman as shorthand. Only the coins and palm-leaves, of all the things belonging to me, were mentioned by the detective as coming under his suspicion. He, no doubt, considered that the nature of these articles eminently proclaimed them to be articles belonging to my uncle.

I scornfully protested against the fellow's presumption in considering these things not mine which he had named. His vulgar acquaintance with life had, I could plainly perceive, induced in him the mean opinion that every man, by nature dishonest, would steal if he had the chance. In answer to my confident inquiry, my uncle was base enough to say that he could not recollect his having given me the medals and palm-slips which had been discovered in my portmanteau; when, with my careful citation of the circumstances attendant on the presentation of these things, he could not but have had his memory perfectly refreshed in regard to that matter. I now de-

clared that I was determined to reserve all further explanation I had at my command, which was calculated to vindicate my honour, until the day when I should stand in trial before a company of just and unprejudiced men.

"You see, I must proceed to extremity of action against this incorrigible nephew of mine," said my uncle, querulously, addressing his friend in the background.

The Captain, with the intention of appearing perfectly neutral in the matter of dispute, was pretending to be occupied with the perusal of some letters which he had taken out of his pocket-book, and now looked up with skilfully affected surprise.

"Oh, give your troublesome nephew his *congé*, and have done with him at once," replied he, with his attention apparently engrossed upon a sheet of paper which he was holding sideways so as to catch the lamplight. After a short pause he again looked up, and gruffly remarked,—"Better do so than make a scapegoat of him."

"Proceed," said my uncle, laconically, to the detectives.

Thereupon the chief functionary proceeded to rehearse the former story almost word for

word. Then he went on to relate that he had found a noteworthy bit of paper in the pocket of one of my coats, which was hanging behind my room door. With mysterious air he displayed a piece of tissue paper, remarking, significantly, that such kind of paper was often used as temporary wrapping for precious stones. "You must know, sir," concluded he, knowingly, addressing the greedily listening old man, "a morsel of paper, or a bit of straw, may often serve us to find out where the wind blows."

"You think, then, my nephew has taken my diamond!" said my uncle, leaning forward, in evident expectancy of hearing the over-communicative detective subscribe in my dishonour an expression equally outspoken with his own. The police agent, however, did not so far forget his duty as to hazard a decided answer to the delicate question now put to him. My uncle, with contracted brows, again leaned back upon his chair, muttering some words of impatience. He was evidently disconcerted to find that even the humble members of the busy world would not act or speak exactly as he wished them to do.

"You haven't missed any more of your gems, have you, sir?" said the detective,

noting that my uncle had retired within himself, and appeared likely to so remain until prompted to come forth again.

The old man started from his reverie with a sudden look of apprehension, and, without uttering a word, nervously disengaged a curious small key from a chain hanging about his neck, and gave it to Stoat, who then proceeded to open a solid-looking ebony cabinet, which was standing on a tripod at the side of my uncle's chair, nearest the wall. The economy of time was hardly considered by my unhappy relative; and he evidently believed that all men were dreamers, like himself, for he coolly proposed that every one present should remain with him until it had been ascertained whether all his gems—a large quantity—were in due custody.

"Was your missing diamond taken out of that box, sir?" inquired the detective, peering over my uncle's chair at Stoat, who, with a candle, and a manuscript catalogue placed close to his hand, was then at work taking an account of the rich collection of gems.

My uncle looked at his questioner with a peevish expression, like that which appears on the face of an ill-natured man when rudely disturbed in sleep. For some few seconds he appeared unable fully to comprehend the

question put to him; but, on his languid gaze encountering my eyes, he started spasmodically, as though stung with the lash of a scourge, and instantly regained his active consciousness. "Ask my nephew to answer that," he said, maliciously.

"Rather ask me," cried the Captain, abruptly, advancing out of his shady place of retreat. Taking his station at the jewel strong-box, he brought his huge fist down upon the top of it with such force as to cause every man in the room to start with nervous alarm, and every loose article to be affected with vibration. Then the rude giant, with voice of indignant wrath, poured forth a telling volley of invectives against my uncle, and also against the police agents, because of their unwarrantable arbitrariness in seeking for cause of suspicion against me; and finally he peremptorily accosted the busy factotum, bidding him give up his unwisely-ordered task, and go hang for his pains.

"But, sir," meekly said the chided detective, "touching the stolen diamond—"

"Mislaid 's the word," interrupted the blatant man of war, with another thump on the jewel box. "Mr. Gall knows he carried the stone with him into the country. Now, d—n

it all!" he added, almost with a plaintive voice; "it is enough, surely, to provoke a saint, to find an accuser like our friend here letting go his memory at a time when old Nick himself is closely watching his chance."

The detective followed up this new direction of affairs by inquiring of my uncle if he admitted that he had lately taken his missing diamond with him into the country. My miserable relative answered it was true that he had taken it with him into the country, and that it was equally true he had brought it home again, and had secreted it in a place which he had intended should be known only to himself. The detective naturally inquired why he should have carried this valuable diamond with him into the country, when he might easily have placed it, for the time being, under safe custody. He desired, also, to be informed why it was that this particular diamond had been secreted away by itself instead of getting a place in the strong-box beside its kindred gems.

"A sufficient answer to both your questions will be," said the Captain, with a slight sneer, perceiving that my uncle was not disposed to vouchsafe any explanation, "that my friend Gall, with all his hard-gotten knowledge, is, indeed, the most superstitious man going. He

actually believes that his big diamond possesses the power of conferring good luck upon its bearer."

"The question we have now to settle is," remarked the detective, after making a note of the Captain's statement, "when was the diamond first missed?"

"The second day before this one," answered my uncle, confidently.

"I know better than that, friend Gall," cried the Captain. "I have evidence in my memorandum book to prove that you missed your precious diamond on the third day before this one. That will show how uncertain is your memory. The fact is, I believe," he remarked, sneeringly, "the stone has not been stolen at all. You have put it away, man, in some mouse-hole, while you were bemuddled with opium, and your memory has since been playing a trick upon you." The Captain's very candid statement made evidently a strong impression upon the detectives, for they now, I observed, exchanged intelligent glances.

My uncle sat up in his chair on hearing his friend's hypothesis to account for the loss of the diamond, and expressed his contempt of it by a series of expressive gestures. Then he turned

to Stoat, and, assuming a confidential smile, inquired of that creature what he thought of the Captain's supposition.

"I should think it isn't very unlikely—I don't know," answered Stoat, to the miserable discomfiture of his master.

I noticed that, when Stoat spoke, a faint smile appeared on the face of the Captain, and that Stoat, glancing upward, detected the meaning smile, and instantly re-directed his gaze towards the interior of the jewel case without exhibiting any change of expression.

My uncle, with a piteous sigh, threw himself back upon his chair, and for some time remained moodily silent, evidently much depressed; and, indeed, his wretchedness was manifested by certain nervous twitchings which vexed his mummy-like countenance.

"Yes," said the Captain, addressing no one in particular; "opium is powerful, we know, to make a man forget his own identity; surely, then, we cannot doubt it may make him forget where he may have hidden certain of his property."

"You take strong waters, and inhale tobacco fumes?" said my uncle, interrogatively, to his unfaithful associate.

"I am not a teetotaler, nor yet a member

of the anti-tobacco league," answered the Captain, with a slight laugh, as if amused.

"Then you must be considered as liable to penalties similar to those which opium, as you say, will sometimes inflict upon its votaries."

"Oh, bosh!"

"What mean you?" said the old man, angrily.

"Dam'me, I have not yielded myself up a slave to an evil habit, as you have done," answered the Captain, with emphasis. "But I drink and smoke sufficient to know what effect stimulants and opiates may have upon a man."

"Be off! be off! all of you, and leave me to resume my old life," cried my uncle, in a sudden paroxysm of rage, gesticulating wildly. "Be off, I say."

"Off, indeed!" said the Captain, contemptuously, "and leave you to yourself, eh?"

"Surya gone, all is gone," moaned the desponding old man, covering his face with his palms.

"Who, or what, is Surya?" curiously inquired the Captain.

"My beautiful diamond," answered my uncle, absently, dropping his hands with dejected air. Then he moved his head slowly round. His

eyes again encountering mine, he started as he had done before, and his cadaverous face reassumed the old expression of malignancy. "You shall go from my house to-night," he said.

"That must be just as your nephew may have a mind to," remarked the Captain, with characteristic officiousness, taking it upon himself to speak for me on a matter which he surely had no concern with whatever.

"O gods of heaven help me!" exclaimed my uncle, on hearing the Captain's words in my favour.

"The time for such a prayer as yours has long gone by," sarcastically remarked the graceless man of war. "Each man nowadays must help himself."

"Will you take my nephew to prison?" said my affectionate relative to the detectives. "You know he has been found unlawfully in possession of my property."

"Your solicitor will advise you, sir, what to do about that," answered the chief agent. "Now," said he, with mysterious air, "I must ask the young gentleman to lend me his attention to another little matter." Producing an old-fashioned vinaigrette, he explained that it had been found with the articles concealed at

the back of the shutters in my room, and that it tallied with the description of one which had been stolen, with other valuables, from Miss Magnet's house—it having her crest graven upon its stopper.

"Oho!" chuckled my uncle, on hearing that an additional cause of suspicion stood against me. I did not deign any remark with regard to this new matter of interest, but affected to regard it with supreme contempt.

"Any other charge against Mr. Amor?" cried the Captain, facetiously.

"Ah, have you got the draught?" said my uncle, abruptly, to the active official, as though prompted by the Captain's idle words.

"And the barrel of gunpowder, and the dark lantern, and so forth," suggested the Captain, with mocking concern.

The second officer, who had hitherto remained in the background, now stepped forward, and drawing forth a common phial stated that he should take it on to the station. I recognized in this phial the bottle containing the opiate that Stoat procured for me during my illness. I gathered from what the detectives said that they had taken possession of it that very morning, in accordance with my uncle's instructions, having

obtained it from the apothecary with whom it had been left by Spinner.

"Allow me to see it," said my uncle. Stoat immediately started forward to pass the bottle from the detective to his master. No sooner had the hideous brute secured it in his monstrous fist than he, with ill-affected clumsiness, dashed it to the ground. As it lay in fragments upon the floor, I observed him direct a subtle glance of devilish joy at his master.

"A most happy accident," blustered the Captain. "The witches' cauldron now loses a potent ingredient for the hell-broth."

My uncle uttered a malediction in Hindoostanee upon the head of Stoat, and sank back again upon his chair; while the offending one cowered, as if overwhelmed with fear and confusion.

"You have done it very cleverly," said the detective, addressing, as it seemed, both my uncle and his servant, evidently regarding Stoat's act as an intentional one.

I could only account for the bringing forward of this potion on the supposition that my enemies, fearing some action on my part with regard to it, sought to nullify my opportunity in that matter by the bold step of taking the initiative upon themselves. I disdained to

notice this cunning move played by my relative and his myrmidon; but I now again stated my unalterable intention of presently seeking ample redress for the measureless insults which had been levelled against me.

"What can be the upshot of all this unconditional warfare, but general sorrow and regret?" said the Captain, who had taken it upon himself to play a part similar to the chorus of a Greek play.

"Why, Captain!" cried my uncle, recalled to attention upon that bewailer of discord, "can it be that you have already forgotten that the young man whose cause you now so favour was busy, only a few minutes ago, throwing discredit upon your name, and mocking you with a mysterious recommendation to go and seek for Iceland Moss at the Minories?"

"Hillo!" ejaculated the chief detective, with curious intonation, while his comrade blew a meaning whistle. Then these two men became watchful as a couple of trained dogs obtaining the scent of an object of chase.

"Come, come, Mr. Talleyrand Gall," said the Captain, keeping his temper remarkably well in check, "I see too clearly the drift of your move to be caught by it."

While my uncle was being checkmated by

his wily antagonist, the police agents held some conversation together in muttered accents, and presently the chief one, advancing, inquired whether the Captain or I knew Iceland Moss, of the Minories, to do business with him.

I answered I was totally unacquainted with the person so entitled, and that, indeed, it was only by mere accident that I had become aware of the existence of such an individual.

"I know Moss only too well," exclaimed the Captain, with perfect composure. Then he addressed his attention to my uncle, and, with admirable assumption of ease, informed the scowling old man of the interesting fact that Moss of the Minories was a Jew dealer in rare stones, and had been facetiously dubbed Iceland Moss from the circumstance of the place of his nativity being the great island in the Northern Ocean. "A wonderful judge of stones is Moss, a perfect genius in that way," concluded the Captain, knowing the while, I believe, that his present communication was particularly offensive to its chosen recipient. "I fear, however, that the fellow lacks common honesty."

"Moss is a receiver as well as a dealer, sir," remarked the police agent, eyeing the Captain very suspiciously.

"An inexhaustible receiver, I should say,"

returned the Captain, with a loud laugh. "I had dealings only a few days ago with the scamp; and was then, I fear, taken in and done for by him."

"Dealings with him?" said the detective, with uncomplimentary emphasis.

"Oh, yes," said the Captain, quietly, with his rugged features wreathed by a self-pitiful smile, expressive of regret for an accomplished act of folly. Then, with a disingenuous manner, he proceeded to explain that, because of his having been an indirect agent, several years before this time, in a matter of jewel valuation which Moss was employed in, he had simply imagined, when a few days ago he desired to sell some valuables for himself, that the Jew dealer would, from remembrance of his former good offices, deal liberally with him. "But, oh, Jerusalem! I was wofully deceived by that scion of your chosen people," concluded the Captain, smiling, and wagging his head, as if amused at the discomfiture of his hopes at the hands of the ungenerous Icelandic Israelite.

"May I inquire what it was you sold to Moss?" said the chief detective, with a furtive wink to his companion.

"Blue stone," curtly replied the wily Cap-

tain, pretending to be nearly absorbed in the contemplation of an object on the table, and which object he had seen, I should say, at least fifty times previously.

"Do you mean—?"

"D—n the man!" cried the Captain, testily, interrupting the inquisitive detective, and turning his eye-glass to bear upon him. "Can't you understand the plain meaning of my words?"

"Yes, I can, but—"

"But you cannot," rejoined the Captain, with pleasant, mocking voice.

"Blue stone is what they calls lapis-lazuli out there in Bengal," said the second detective, evidently proud of his pinchbeck knowledge.

"Hilloa!" exclaimed the Captain, surprised to find himself forestalled by an English policeman in the pleasure of explaining an Indian slang term, "how came you to be informed of that?"

"I had a turn out there in the Mutiny," replied the policeman, with affectation of modesty.

"By Jove!" cried the Captain, heartily, "I little thought I should have the pleasure of meeting a comrade on this occasion of the falling out of friends." Then, yielding to his

ruling passion, he spoke of the great deeds done by himself in India, while he had been in active military service, and repeated once more his familiar assertion that he, in his day, had been a positive Nemesis amidst the rebellious Sepoys.

"But we are now going away from our business," said the foreman detective, apparently doubting the honesty of the bombastic digression.

"I forgot, I forgot," uttered the braggart man of war, abruptly quitting his pet theme, and making with his hands a series of seesaw gestures, expressive of his deprecation of his own weakness in straying, upon the slightest provocation, into memories of battle. "Ah!" uttered he further, with a reflective motion of his head, "you civilians cannot understand a soldier's feelings." And then, with well-affected simplicity, he appealed to his newly found comrade for corroboration of his assertion.

"You 're right, sir," agreeably responded the war-experienced detective.

A spirit of comradeship was now established between these two ex-warriors. Nothing could have happened more opportunely to the Captain for the benefit of his interests than this unexpected reciprocity of feeling, as it enabled

him to secure a truce at a time when he was threatened with a disastrous isolation.

"Speaking in a general sense," remarked the adverse detective, looking with severe aspect upon the Captain, "I make bold to say, I am sorry that you, sir, have had dealings with old Moss."

"A soaring bit of arrogance we have now," exclaimed the Captain, re-fortified in self-confidence by the unlooked-for dissension in the ranks of his besetting foes. Then he addressed himself again to my uncle—who, I could plainly perceive, was secretly fretting his very heart away with vexation at not finding things going on as he had desired, and also expected—and invited him to note well the words uttered by the police agent as being remarkably illustrative of the extent of official censorship permitted now in this formerly free country. "D—n it all!" concluded the irrepressible Captain, indignantly, "has it come about at last that a man must not only see to his own honour, but must also inquire concerning the purity of every one coming in contact with him in the way of business—eh, Gall?"

"The rule has its recommendations," morosely replied the unprincipled old man.

"I take it, sir," said the Captain, with that

voice of triumphant precision which a card-player often adopts when he is going to trump the game, "that life to some of us would be difficult if beset with conditions such as you would seem to approve of. Why, sir, would you not be liable to severe penalties for having once been on familiar terms with the notorious Nana Saheb?"

"Talker!" uttered my uncle, with angry contempt. Then he again turned to the obstinate detective, and with hasty manner—assumed evidently with purpose of exhibiting himself as unaffected by the hypothesis which had been advanced to account for the loss of his diamond—asked that officer to devote his powers wholly and solely to the purpose of tracing the presumed thief.

"You have done a worse thing than hiding your own diamond would be, friend Gall," said the Captain, in revenge for the insult he had received. "You have robbed yourself even of your own health."

My uncle's face became so exceedingly ugly from his severe effort to swallow down the rage which rose in his gorge at the Captain's scoff, that, although at this time I was suffering under a positive flood-tide of depressing influence, I yet thoroughly enjoyed this turning

of the tables upon my wretched relative, in his infamous attempt to secure me within his toils.

The Captain, grown bold by the tacit support of his newly discovered former companion-in-arms, proceeded to deliver tantalizing sarcasms at my uncle, which at one time he gave in the form of analogy, recounting the familiar story of an absent-minded scholar, who once sought about a room to find his glasses, when all the time he had them upon his forehead. "Most likely," concluded the Captain, with evident self-assurance of having determined the question, "your missing diamond, friend Gall, will be found in one of your own pockets."

"I shall not go hence to-night!" I intimated to my uncle, in defiance of his spiteful decree that I should be summarily turned adrift into the outer darkness.

"And I shall now take my leave," said the Captain, with his eye illuminated by a twinkle of satisfaction.

"Would that you had done so before now!" ungenerously remarked the disappointed old man.

"I cannot say 'Amen' to your sentiment, sir," quoth the Captain, evidently well pleased with the resolution of events.

My uncle made no further remark to his self-seeking friend, but addressed his attention to the detectives, motioning them to take their leave of him.

The policemen passed out of the room, and each one wished good-night to the pitiable master; and he wearily returned the conventional good wish of these men. Then followed the Captain, and he cried gaily, "*Au revoir!*" intending it both for my uncle and myself; but the only answer this impertinent expression received was the one supplied by its own echo. Lastly, I passed out in contemptuous silence, going upstairs to my own room.

CHAPTER II.

CHUND waited upon me as usual. Desiring to test the extent of the conditions attendant upon the persecutions conducted against me by my uncle, I bade him fetch me a cup of coffee. To my agreeable surprise I was served, in obedience to my order, with almost miraculous expedition. I had become abstracted in speculative thought when, by some occult means, I was made aware that something of unusual presence was standing behind me. Turning my head, I was startled to behold my Hindoo servant standing at a table quite motionless. His ever-restless, almond-shaped eyes were keenly watching me.

"What do you want here now?" I said, feeling disagreeably affected by the silence-breaking tones of my own voice.

The Indian, chary as ever of speech, respectfully uttered the single word "Saheb," and then bent slowly almost to the ground, with his three fingers resting upon his forehead.

"Well, Chund?" I asked, impatiently.

Thereupon my unbidden visitor pointed mysteriously towards the shutter which had been used for concealment of the stolen property.

Rising in amazement at this extraordinary action, I bade him speak out at once what he wished to impart to me. The mysteriarch, however, did not respond to my exhortation, but again pointed in the same direction, and then backward to his own breast. I was puzzled to interpret the meaning of these ominous signs. I looked angrily upon the automaton-like brown man, and peremptorily bade him at once explain himself in a plain manner.

"Meh," he uttered, nodding his head quickly several times, and tapping on his breast with the tips of his fingers. "Meh, Saheb."

I instantly perceived he referred to himself; but what he meant to confess in regard to the stolen articles discovered at the back of the shutter, I could not yet divine. Being extremely irritable, in consequence of the severe trials to which I had been subjected during the day, I angrily addressed this slow, deep man, telling him that I had no doubt he had accepted terms from my enemies to try and inveigle me into their toils, and I bade him have a care how he acted, as I was on the alert

for his trickery. I had forgotten for the moment that Chund was but slightly acquainted with the English tongue, and I was therefore mortified to find that my vehemence only represented an amount of unprofitably expended breath. The Indian, simply comprehending that I was angered, had recourse to that never-failing allayer of choleric heat, the Eastern salaam, and then calmly awaited to hear me rave a little further. I had no doubt that Chund had been commissioned by my mortal enemies to take part in their foul plotting against me, and I felt certain they would, in the event of exposure happening to their evil designs, try to make a scapegoat of him. It would be hopeless, thought I, for me to cope with these unprincipled beings in an open-handed manner; and as I was proceeding to review the points of my position, I suddenly perceived, to my great joy, an opportunity of making a particular move which would very likely secure for me this important pawn of my opponents.

I bade the mysterious Indian say, if he had been incited by my uncle and Stoat to take part in their machinations against me; and without pause I proceeded to exhort him to act up to his plain duty, so far as to do by me as I

had done by him. The opinion I had formed of Chund's character was not sufficiently high to incline me to think that he was acting from any sense of justice. It occurred to me that he might have been acting from either of the two following reasons. First, that he had not been bribed to his satisfaction; or, secondly, that he was playing out a game to his own hand. I regarded all my uncle's servants as being inherently joyless of temperament, and altogether devoid of generous impulse; and I held Chund to be the most prominent in exhibition of reticence of the whole band. As I fearfully regarded this strange-mannered man, I recollected some extraordinary theories once addressed to me by my inscrutable uncle, in regard to what he considered as justifiable conduct on the part of individuals peculiarly situated. He had described, and at the same time applauded, a certain practice upheld, as he said, by most Indian potentates, namely, that of retaining a professional man-slayer amongst their followers; and in the course of his argument upon the subject, when I had expressed my abhorrence of such practice, he declared it to be his opinion that my fine scruples on the subject were even at variance with the authority of my own religion. The

occupants of the throne of Christian England, have been allowed, said he, until very recently, the privilege of retaining a private executioner amongst the members composing the royal retinue. As I recalled to mind these disquieting remarks, the horrible thought occurred to me, that the man now standing before me, humble of mien, and physiologically perfect, was engaged by my relative in the two-fold capacity of servant usually and murderer casually. On the strong impulse of the emotion I put the question to him, if he had been prompted by my enemies to try and rob me of my life.

Chund understood the purport of my hurried utterance, and he deliberately returned me an answer, which, on the instant, startled me, so as to force the blood back to my heart. "Serang Stoat say kill Masser Saheb Amor," said he, with his teeth gleaming from out their dusky surroundings.

I felt appalled, to reflect that I was alone at the dead of night, in an enemy's house, with this subtle, lithe creature, who had acknowledged that he had been commissioned to kill me. I could detect no sign on his part indicative of his resolution to try to accomplish the dreadful deed, which he stood charged to

perform. Nevertheless, I resolved to observe a suspicious vigilance. I was careful to keep myself for the rest of this interview close to the fire-irons, so that I should be able to command effective means of defence in case of need.

"In what manner were you instructed to kill me?" I inquired, trying to appear calm, while I conjured up a burning sensation in my throat, remembering the coffee I had recently taken.

Chund instantly raised his head on high, and quite horrified me by a masterly pantomimic action of clutching his throat round with nimble fingers, accompanying the terrible movement by gaping with his mouth, and eclipsing his eyes with his upper lids.

My heart seemed to die within me, to witness the Indian's fearful gestures. However, with an affected nonchalance, I made feint of laughter at his ghastly performance.

But if I had thought to communicate my levity to my companion, I was certainly disappointed, for, on the instant after the withdrawal of his griping hands from his neck, he resumed his wonted composure. I proceeded next to inquire of him if my uncle had known of the order given him to kill me; but to this

inquiry he observed an obstinate silence. I was careful to tell this unfathomable creature, that he must repeat his confession to the police authorities, if he truly wished to do me a substantial service. To my anxious admonition, my doubtful friend returned for reply a salaam, expressive, no doubt, of his great deference for my authority.

"You can go now, Chund," said I, unable any longer to bear his company.

Making no answer, he changed his attitude of abject servility to one of acute attention to some distant sound, and presently murmured the household name of my uncle's factotum.

Fearing some treacherous violence, I quickly took note of all the resources of defence which lay within my power to employ, and in stern spirit awaited the expected assault.

"Him go bed," continued Chund, after a long pause, which he had employed in listening attentively to the sound of footsteps ascending the stairs.

"And surely not an instant too soon," said I, with a cynical laugh, wondering why I should be supposed to feel interested in the going up of my chief enemy to his bedchamber.

Chund now stole with crouching gait towards

the door, going step by step, deliberately and noiselessly as a tiger about to spring upon its prey. On reaching the door he applied his ear to the key-hole, and remained listening intently for a minute at least. Then he returned to the table in my vicinity, and stared upon me with an expression such as I had never beheld in any human countenance before. I was positively terror-stricken to encounter the strange, devilish glare of this creature's speaking eyes, and involuntarily I bent my knees to lessen the space between my ready right hand and the fire poker.

"What now?" I gasped, almost fascinated by his unearthly glare.

He inclined his supple body slowly forward across the table, and keeping his basilisk eyes fixed upon me, pointed towards the staircase, and with low, chanting voice uttered the words,—"Serang say kill you, Masser Saheb Amor."

"Well?"

"Masser Saheb Amor make sign—so," he continued, holding his lean right hand on high, while a horrible gleam shone in his entrancing eyes. "Serang die to-night in his sleep."

"Why? how?" I ejaculated, in nervous alarm, unable to comprehend the meaning of

Chund's portentous words. I shudder with mingled awe and humiliation to state that my servant had so miserably misjudged my character, as to make himself certain of obtaining my consent to join with him in an affair of midnight murder. The conscienceless wretch having just been commissioned by another as vile as himself to murder me, thought now to return me, for favours given him, an acceptable service in his performing an act of murder upon his instigator. With a pantomimic action shocking to behold, but eloquent to a rare degree, he exhibited to my awe-struck gaze a series of nightmare tableaux. I saw a shadowy, spare figure, stooping downward, with noose in hand, as if proceeding with the foul work of strangling a man in his slumber. Anon, I beheld the dusky form raise himself erect again, and apply his noose to the candle flame, as if with design to destroy the evidence of the dark deed.

"I know now!" I cried, with a sudden, fearful recollection. "This is a rehearsal of the rites of the Thugee goddess, Bohwanie."

When I so exclaimed, the Indian bestowed upon me a strange, intelligent look. Never surely did human being exhibit greater contrasts of manner with immediate changes than

did this devil incarnate, who communicated his design to me by means solely of gesticulation. The changes of his extraordinary exhibitions were so abrupt, that I was even given thereby a succession of shocks to my feelings. The Indian brought his dreadful pantomime to a close, and then stood before me a simple-looking, handsome figure, with eyes downcast, and hands folded in front.

"Begone hence, and take your monstrous friendship with you!" I shouted, with vehement scorn, to the wretch who had so grievously offended my moral instincts.

This votary of a deadly faith, ever true to his affectation of perfect self-command, again addressed to me a respectful salaam, and then flitted out of my sight, departing without any perceivable sound to his movements, save that which came from his opening and closing the room door.

I sat down for a while, and thought over it all, and, while I ruminated over the Indian's strange visit, I was suddenly struck with the tormenting doubt whether it was or was not my bounden duty to warn my most hateful enemy of the deadly menace made against him which I had been made cognizant of.

Presently the terrifying remembrance occurred

to me that, while I was dismissing the dark-designing Indian, I had, in the vehemence of the moment, raised my hand aloft, and all at once it occurred to me that that mechanical action might have been construed by my blood-thirsty visitor to signify my consent to his proposal. Up I sprang, and opening the room-door, peered anxiously into the gloom beyond; but all was apparently in a state of absolute rest. Then I listened attentively, but the darkness was as perfectly still as the Dead Sea, and the stern silence appalled my sensitive heart. I struck my palms together, expecting by that usual means to summon Chund again to my presence, and the staircase rang with the echo. A few seconds elapsed, and as the expected brown figure had not answered to my summons, I repeated my noisy act, when, mingled with the answering echoes reverberating through hall and corridor, a human voice sounded from above with angry shout. This voice I recognized as that of the creature whose life I had feared to be in jeopardy.

"Who calls?" said he, after a pause maintained on both sides.

"I want Chund," I answered, with studied intonation of discourtesy to my challenger.

Then, with sudden thought, I bade him

come himself to me, adding, as an inducement for his obedience to my call that I had a communication to make to him which concerned his interests very particularly.

"Your communication surely is not so very tender but that it will keep until the morning," returned Stoat, with voice of insulting irony.

I was not sufficiently logical in my resentment towards this man, for immediately upon hearing his insolent answer I drew back into my own room, with the impulsive determination of suffering him to take his chance at the hands of fate. I slammed the door with an impetus calculated to drive the air forcibly up to his face, and then I paced about the room, trying to reconcile my conscience to the proposal that I should go to bed, and let events happen just as they might.

I became unable to bear my state of doubt, and so I again opened the door, and struck my hands twice together. I waited in expectation of an answer for somewhere about a minute, and then finding that no one troubled himself to respond to my unreasonable call, waxing exceedingly impatient, I made the spacious staircase ring again in a manner such as had never been heard in it, I feel confident to say, during all its good hundred years of existence.

At this moment I heard my uncle clapping his hands in the library.

I was greatly surprised to find that my own loud signals did not succeed in bringing Chund into my presence, and I also marvelled that the creature upstairs had not answered to my second call, as only some twenty minutes, at most, had elapsed since his act of insolent response to me, and I could not think that such a damnable villain should, in so short a time, be able to command the visitation of sound sleep. Presently I detected the pattering of footsteps in the passage below, followed by the slight sound occasioned by the opening of the door of my uncle's room. When I had subjected myself to the draft of the staircase for fully five minutes, I was gratified, to a certain extent, to observe one of my relative's Indian personal attendants glide up the stairs and make his ceremonious obeisance to me.

"Where is Chund?" I inquired, in dire mental uneasiness to find that a nearly strange attendant had taken the place of my own man.

This Indian scarce knew, I believe, a connected sentence of the English language. My uncle, when addressing him, always employed an Indian vernacular. He, no doubt, did not understand the words I uttered, but his recog-

nition of the missing man's name proved sufficient to prompt him as to the intention of my inquiry. He said nothing in reply, but simply pointed upwards in the direction of Stoat's sleeping-apartment. I trembled at the indicatory gesture, and hastily thought of sending him upon an errand of strict search for the absentee; but on observing that he was anxious to proceed upstairs to fulfil the terms of his master's commission, I intimated to him, by sign, that he might depart.

I waited at the threshold of my room until the Indian came downstairs again, and then was afforded a remarkable instance of the firm self-command that distinguishes the Hindoo race. Desiring to make me understand that my presence was imperatively demanded in Stoat's room, this man did not comport himself in any excited manner, but with the calmest possible demeanour he first made a respectful salaam, and then again pointed upwards, and uttered a few sounds, which, though foreign to my ears, yet were plainly intelligible to mean that something had gone wrong in the room above, and it was advisable for me personally to see to it at once.

I thrust the ceremonious Indian aside, nearly driving him headlong downstairs, and in dire

apprehension, rushed up to the landing outside the vizier's room. Dismissing all delicate considerations, I instantly pushed open the door, and entered the private chamber of my most malignant enemy. He was lying in bed. As my eager eyes first caught sight of his face, and noted that the tint thereof was one of life, a song of abounding gratitude arose from my inward spirit to heaven. No sign was visible to indicate that he had been touched by any violent hand, but there was evidence enough in his fixed, open eyes and mouth, and laboured respiration, to prove that he was suffering either under a fit or the deadly spell of some potent opiate. A chill, the most miserable to conceive, seized me on beholding this bad man lying abed all torpid, most probably from the effect of malevolently administered poppy juice. I felt almost certain that his insensibility was due to the hand of my monstrously wicked attendant, and I had little doubt that the culminating act of Chund's awful plot had been on the very eve of fulfilment at the time when I was in the first instance clapping my hands to call for his attendance upon me. Chund was, I strongly suspected, a member of that odious sect, the Thugs.

I approached close to the bed, and looked

down upon the face of the deep sleeper; and then the grimly humorous thought occurred to me, that he certainly slept well not to move when thus I gazed upon him. I proceeded to raise his eyelid with my finger, when I ascertained, by the rigidity of the pupil, that this case was one of coma. Upon the table I found a glass containing the lees of a strong spirituous drink, having the odour of rum, and yielding also the flavour of an opiate drug when put to a critical examination by the tongue. I could not take upon myself to treat this critical case, so I wrote on a slip of paper a brief description of the symptoms attendant on the case, and addressed it to my uncle, taking care also to advise that no time should be lost in procuring the services of a skilful medical practitioner. I experienced no trouble this time in finding a servant, as no sooner was my writing completed than there stood before me the same silent brown man whom I had so nearly overturned on the staircase. When first I beheld him within Stoat's room, he appeared in an attitude of respectful curvature, and he seemed as though resuming his last act of salaam exactly at the point where I had rudely caused its suspension. I awaited on this occasion, almost deferentially, for this perfectly self-pos-

sessed being to acquit himself to his own satisfaction ere I tendered him the missive to take to his master. As he withdrew from my presence, going backward out at the door, and making not the slightest mistake in the order of his going, I could not help thinking how almost impossible it must appear to every Englishman who has studied the ways of the Indo-Germanic race, that British sentiment and manners could ever be grafted upon those eminently conservative people of the East.

When again left alone with the unconscious wretch lying on his bed, I glanced curiously about the room to discover by the articles present what were the owner's secret tastes. Without using my advantage in any unfair manner, my eyes were presently arrested by a folded package of tissue paper peeping out from between a pile of books, which package, on examination, I found to have had the top leaf torn away in a careless manner. I at once was convinced that the piece of paper which had been discovered in my coat-pocket, and held to testify against my honour, was the very part missing from the package now strangely revealed to my sight. There existed no possibility of immediate proof to my present conviction, and my first impulse was to take pos-

session of the suspected package, and keep it to be submitted on the morrow to the attention of the police authorities appointed to trace the lost diamond. After a little reflection, however, I saw how easily it might be made to appear that I only produced fresh proof of my own culpability in bringing forward the roll of paper from which had been torn the piece that was found in my pocket. I was conscious of my nature having acquired within the short limits of the past single day a habit of cunning which was both new and disagreeable to me. I had been for at least two hours in such an eminent school of craft, that it was impossible I should not have been impregnated with a little of the only spirit which was in active circulation during the time. I observed, to my disgust, that the walls were decorated with the impure paintings which I had banished from my own sitting-apartment. I noted also that the books in this chamber were all devoted to pictures of life in which purity and godliness had no place.

Time went heavily with me while I waited for the coming of the physician, and half an hour passed without even bringing a single member of the household to look in upon me. No sound broke the dead stillness, save the

miserable snore proceeding from the laboured respiration of my insensible companion. My spirit, under the depressing circumstances, at length grew so anxious, that I could endure the situation no longer without some intelligent companionship. On the impulse of my nervous feeling I moved out to the head of the stairs, and was about to perform the usual signal, when my purpose was arrested by a reverberating peal of thunder which was now launched into the bosom of the brooding night. I started back in sudden alarm, and presently feeling myself growing faint, I moved out again upon the stairs to obtain some fresh air, when, to my unexpected joy, I detected the sound of footsteps. On peering over the balustrade, I beheld ascending the stairs a black-clothed figure, which I knew to be that of the welcome physician. Accompanying him was a white-robed figure, that of one of the Indian servants, who was bearing a small Etruscan oil-lamp to illuminate the way.

Step by step slowly mounted these figures up the long, long ascent. Great was my joy when at length I was able to grasp the hand of the physician, and give him such greeting as the occasion permitted.

This gentleman was the same who had

attended me in my severe illness. With commendable forethought he expended none of his breath in returning words to my salutation; but, simply giving back the pressure of my hand, in discreet silence immediately went in to his patient. I placed my services at his command. Now, though he was aware that I was a student of medicine, he returned but little encouragement to my offer. I considered it my duty to inform him of the murderous hints addressed to me by Chund; but he seemed to attach but small importance to my information.

"I dare say the patient is suffering from an overdose of narcotic, administered by his own hand," was his answer. Presently he added, as if suddenly remembering,—"The various members of this house are greatly addicted to the use of opium."

I next tried to engage his attention upon the suspicious piece of paper which I had found in Stoat's room; but my ungenial companion would not in this matter even concede the courtesy of an answer. I felt sorely annoyed at being coldly repulsed in all my attempts to secure a just sympathy; and, in the fulness of my emotion, I cried aloud that my uncle's house was a positive den of villains, and that

the man now lying senseless in his bed was the most atrocious villain of them all.

"Hark'ee, young gentleman!" said the physician, facing towards me, and pointing impressively at his patient. "My present duty is alone to try and restore this man to consciousness, and not to take on the additional part of a doctor of the law or a professor of moral philosophy."

"Pardon me, sir," I replied, with contrite spirit; "I now see my unreasonableness. But pray believe me, when I say I have been sorely tried within these few hours past."

"Go to bed, my boy, go to bed," said the physician, with changed voice of kindliness. This generous disposition towards me, coming at a moment when my feelings were in an extremely excited state, so completely overcame me that I was obliged to yield to a fit of weeping. "You are apt, I am afraid, to think too much of yourself," continued my companion, placing his hand gently upon my back. "You must devote some thought to the trials of your neighbours, and then you may find yourself able to make light of your own."

"I have been accused of theft, while I am perfectly innocent," said I, dwelling still upon my own exceptionally severe trials.

"Then in your case," replied my good adviser, confidently, "you are indeed foolish in vexing your mind as you are doing. The innocent have nothing to fear."

I thanked him cordially for the counsel he had given me; and finding he had no particular occasion for my services, I wished him good-night and retired to my own chamber. I cannot remember any time when the value of a word in season was so much felt by me as at that moment. After a little reflection I was able happily to see that I was not fairly justified in considering myself a very Job of the Christians. My health and integrity were still as good as ever, and my reasonable personal necessities were assured for some years to come. I had therefore every reason to be hopeful instead of despondent.

Presently I heard the sound of the physician's footsteps descending the stairs, and I apprehended he had concluded to leave his patient under the care of some one in the house while the deep sleep from the drug should last. Anon, I heard him tapping at my uncle's door. Almost immediately a dull shock went up through the house, which I knew proceeded from the slamming of the front door. From this I gathered that my uncle had returned no answer.

I felt more than ever impressed with the idea that my uncle's household was one in which loving-kindness was unknown, and presently I rejoiced to think that the morrow's sun should see me depart hence for good and all. Resigning myself to the care of Heaven, I lay down on my couch, and soon fell into a sound sleep, in which I remained undisturbed until a late hour of the morning.

CHAPTER III.

SOON after I had made a hand-clapping signal to announce the fact of my being in readiness to enter upon the duties of the day, breakfast was brought up to me. I remarked that the Indian who had attended upon my late summons in the staircase had now taken the place of Chund. I felt very hungry, but firmly refrained from partaking of the tempting repast set before me, as I had early resolved never again to accept my uncle's bounty. I had questioned my attendant on his first appearance as to how his "Serang" was faring by this time. He answering with a bright look, and an odd gesture of pointing upwards, I concluded that the individual in question had recovered his usual condition. I could not have reasonably supposed him dead, for the Indian had pointed heavenward, and surely this was hardly suggestive of the evil-doer's spirit having made its grand release.

I hurried through with some necessary preparations, and made positively famished by

actual want, sharpened cruelly by the sight of the alluring viands set out upon the table, I seized my hat, with the eager intention of sallying forth to allay my lively hunger, when, as ill-luck would have it, there was sent up to me the card of my uncle's lawyer, with his request for an immediate interview.

The name of this scion of the law was Cohen. He was Jewish, and was very proud of the fact. The Cohens of the Israelitish people are, I believe, of the united tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and claim to be the royal line of the Hebrews. They enjoy peculiar distinctions, as, for instance, exemption from the wearing of habiliments of mourning. My uncle's lawyer used a seal having an emblem of extended hands touching at their forefingers and thumbs. I saw the impress of that seal now, and thought how mocking a one it was to be flaunted in this case of rancorous difference between my uncle and myself. I intimated that I should see Mr. Cohen, intending to ask him to excuse my absence for some twenty minutes in order to get some breakfast. When, however, I came into communication with him, I was so annoyed at his manner of studied gravity, that I thought no more for the time of breakfast.

Mr. Cohen took the chair which I offered him,

and proceeded to sigh, and then to utter a variety of disagreeable sounds, all expressive of his concern for my presumed backsliding. This man exhibited all the normal characteristics of a son of Israel, having a boldly curved nasal outline, very piercing eyes, good teeth, and a naturally good constitution. He had, I understand, a large connexion, being reputed patient and clever in his professional capacity.

"Are you unwell, sir?" said I, meaning to be severe.

"I am unwell; I am unwell," he answered, adroitly, treating my inquiry as if it had been made in earnest. Then he reached over to me with a sudden movement, and catching hold of both my hands, with concerned voice, cried out,—"Oh, my young friend, what can you mean by your present conduct towards your uncle?"

I instantly perceived that Mr. Cohen's pathos was not real, and, being in no humour to graciously appreciate his skilful performance, I snatched my hands out of his grasp, and stood further off. Then I bade him lay aside all his tricks of trade, and state his present business with me in perfectly unaffected language.

"I feel really sorry," he said, with a sad shake of his head, "to know you have been misbehaving yourself, Mr. Amor. And then—

oh, dear! how distressing it is to think of the unhappiness your poor uncle has suffered on your account!"

"Poor man!" I returned, with mocking pitifulness. "I wonder he is still alive."

"That is your wonder, eh?" said Mr. Cohen, in quite a new key. "I must then inform you that a man is not so easily killed as you appear to think."

"Sir," I said, with caustic earnestness, "I know my uncle has a strong desire to live on, and I dare say his anxious wish may help him a little."

"Perhaps so," answered the lawyer, drily. "But still your uncle cannot possibly enjoy his remaining days of life if he be subjected to continuance of the experience of these past few days. Now—"

I interrupted him, asking him to spare me any further conversation being only preliminary to some serious question which no doubt had occasioned his visit to me.

A slight shade of annoyance passed over Mr. Cohen's face when I thus checked him. He coughed, as though to clear his throat, and then with changed, hard voice proceeded to speak in praise of my uncle's character, asserting to my indignant ears that the valetudi-

narian in question was deserving of all sympathy and respect. "I cannot think," concluded he, by way of peroration to his designing panegyric, "there ever was a man with a more forgiving nature than your uncle."

"Forgiving!" I repeated, with utmost disdain.

"Yes," he affirmed, "I conscientiously apply the term in relation to your uncle's character."

"I cannot admit the justice of your present application of the term."

"Will you allow me to argue out my assertion?"

"Oh, Mr. Cohen!" I said, almost entreatingly, "pray hasten to state your real business with me."

"Well, then," he said, agreeably, rising from his seat, and placing his hand upon my shoulder in a familiar manner, "the sum and substance of my present business with you, Mr. Amor, is, first to try and reconcile you with yourself, and then to follow the good work up with, I hope and trust, that consummation devoutly to be wished, a reconciliation with your uncle. Be warned in time, rash young gentleman!" he continued, with portentous voice. "You have brought yourself, by your own exceeding folly, as it were, into a

niche over a yawning gulf, and now your offended uncle has only to exercise his slightest power to bring about your instant certain destruction."

"I have no doubt," I returned, unmoved, "my uncle will gladly avail himself of the power you say he possesses for my ruin, if only you should make him aware of it."

"You wrong your uncle in your ungenerous supposition," remarked the monitor, gravely; "for he, though stung to the quick by your aggravating taunts, yet would stretch forth his hand even as a friend."

"I shall never again accept his friendship."

"He liberally repeats his offer to you of a situation in India," said Mr. Cohen, unheedful of my contemptuous words, and staring very earnestly into my eyes. "And I would urgently recommend you to close with that offer."

I felt disgusted with the offer made me now for the second time, and I expressed my feeling with an impatient gesture; whereupon the lawyer tried to frighten me into submission by declaring it to be his conviction that, in the event of my obstinate refusal of this offer, my uncle would be placed under the necessity of proceeding against me criminally.

"Let him so proceed against me!" I cried defiantly, shaking myself free from my adviser's touch. "I fear not his persecution, for I know that he will stand alone in his cause of monstrous deceit, while I shall have the whole just world at my back."

"My good young friend," said the lawyer, with pitiful accent, smiling thoughtfully while he spake, "your present remark may suit well enough as a piece of sentiment; but to be applied, as you have applied it, to a contemplated police case, it is, I regret to say, fund only for laughter."

I had already spurned my uncle's selfish offer at a time when no compromise of honour was demanded in the matter; but now, considering the grievous insult which I had recently been subjected to, I positively loathed his offer of expediency as proposed to me by his ambassador.

"I would not accept my uncle's specious favour, if it were to save my very life," I said, with lofty disdain.

"I confidently presume," remarked Mr. Cohen, with changed, dry, humorous voice, "you never have been before a magistrate, as a —prisoner?"

"Never."

"Well, now, take my advice—that of a man who has had great experience in affairs of this kind. Don't appear at the bar of a criminal court if you can possibly help it."

"There is still another Bar at which I sooner or later must appear," I returned, with fixed determination of purpose. "And I mean to strive to appear at that Bar with an unstained conscience."

"You are hardly fitted, I fear, for the give-and-take business of ordinary life," said the lawyer. Then he abruptly left me, smiling to himself, and ominously shaking his head as he walked out of my room.

I now realized, curiously enough, for the first time, the importance there is for man to be careful in attention to the wants of the flesh. Being now alone, and nearly famished, I felt altogether despondent, and at variance with myself, with the outward world, and even with Providence. This experience convinced me that courage can scarcely exist in a man who may be suffering from a poverty-stricken state of stomach.

I sallied forth, and entered the first hotel I lighted upon; and when I had fortified myself with much-needed food, I felt almost a new man. I dare say I astonished, and also

annoyed, my spider-like relative when I returned to his house; for, whereas on my going forth I had crept out of his hateful domicile in moody silence, I was now jaunty of step and altogether lively in demeanour, whistling, as I did unconsciously, a favourite air, and clearing three steps at every stride in going up to my room.

I found I had a considerable deal of business to arrange ere I could properly take a final leave of my present quarters. I wished to go away, of course, in an open and honourable manner; and as I intended taking up a temporary residence in some respectable hotel, I occupied the whole forenoon in writing letters to those of my friends who still were on kindly terms with me.

I had just finished the last one of my epistolary missives, and was trying to compose myself to think over the ways and means of my past experience, so as to obtain valuable memoranda to help me in making my course through the anticipated dangerous future, when my room door was unceremoniously pushed open, and in came the policeman whose acquaintance I had made on the preceding night, followed by my Indian attendant with head bowed low in solemn obeisance.

I immediately apprehended the intention of this visit, and, animated with a sort of bravado, I jumped up from my chair, and hastily cried out that I hoped the policeman now had come to me to announce that my uncle had decided to refer our quarrel to the impartial arbitration of a magistrate.

"It's a good job you think as you do, sir," said the police agent, apparently taken a little aback by my disposition to welcome a decision which, in its effect, was as a very seal upon a cause of implacable contention. Then he produced a warrant for my arrest on a charge of felony, preferred by my uncle, and signed in due form.

I was by this time, unhappily, familiarized with persecution, and so felt very little concern at the new ordeal awaiting me. Indeed, my nonchalance was so great that I laughed derisively when the policeman exhibited his authoritative writ empowering him to seize my person, and take me off with him to answer for my misdoings as alleged.

If I were disposed to treat the matter of my arrest with a calm spirit, the police agent, on the other hand, played his part in it after the prosaic manner of a journeyman getting through with a particular job of the day's list.

The hard apathy of my arrestor was strongly evidenced when, in reply to my statement of opinion that in my present case I was entitled to take my own time in arranging things for my leaving, he curtly remarked that his present duty was only a part of his day's work, and in its performance must not be allowed to take up any longer time than was strictly necessary.

Having seen that everything of my own was safely stowed away and properly secured, I announced my readiness to go forth in the capacity of a prisoner to a court of justice. My custodian, with collected, business-like air, at once led the way.

I was amused, even under my dismal circumstances, to observe the gaze of curiosity which was bestowed by the policeman upon my Indian servant, who had remained standing almost motionless in the room, awaiting my order for his release; and which order I neglected to give him until I was about to make my own exit, when he bowed his head almost to touch the ground, but spake not a word.

"He is a rum-lookin' Jigger, to be sure," remarked the policeman, with a touch of scorn, surveying the silent brown man up and

down as though he were quite a curiosity of his species.

I was darkly ignorant of the law, and on my road to the court—whither I proceeded in a cab—I imagined vain things, deciding within myself that I should plead my own cause. I entertained the pitiable conceit that, perhaps, I should, by a simple eloquence evoked from conscious rectitude, cause my wicked accusers to fall suddenly and completely as did those historical walls of Jericho at the blast of Joshua's trumpets.

My companion sat opposite me, and amused himself, while disgusting me, by whistling a popular refrain villainously out of tune. The thought occurring to me that this man might be able to give me some information with regard to the procedure of a criminal court, I asked him for information upon the subject.

He answered, with distressing matter-of-fact air, that he should recommend me to keep my tongue between my teeth, and leave my defence entirely to my lawyer.

"But I mean to be my own advocate," I said, annoyed to find my meditated flight already given a check.

"Oh, indeed!" uttered the stolid policeman, regarding me with a pitying look of

surprise. "Then you are going to plead guilty?"

"Certainly not."

"In that case," he remarked, quietly, with a very expressive nod and wink, "take my advice, and get a good man to act for you. I can, for certain, tell you that outsiders never yet have been known to work wonders in a law court." Then he laid himself back again, and resumed his interrupted air, with a manner worse, if possible, than before.

"Outsiders," repeated I, discouraged, and scarce knowing I spake aloud.

"Yes," said my adviser, with provoking assurance, "and if what I have told you is not a a fact, then I know ne'er another."

We now arrived at the police court, where I was kept in waiting until nearly four o'clock, when I was unceremoniously led before the sitting magistrate, and, the indictment against me being read out aloud, I was committed for trial. On my own application, bail was allowed, two sureties being required, each to the amount of one hundred and fifty pounds sterling, and my personal security to the amount of two hundred pounds.

I was most miserably disappointed in my expectations in relation to my appearance as a

prisoner in a court of justice, for, having flattered myself with the belief that I should, perhaps, move the court to a pitch of righteous indignation by the recital of my wrongs, I was actually treated with a chilling indifference, and, whenever I essayed to utter a word or two of explanation, was sternly reminded that it would be advisable for me to reserve my defence for the day of my trial.

"Is the prisoner represented?" curtly enquired the jaded magistrate.

"I represent myself," I answered, trying to sustain the high feeling which had been so unmercifully discouraged on every side.

The magistrate looked severely at me, and inquired what was my profession, and, upon being informed on that point, he sneeringly repeated in French the proverb, "*Chacun à son métier.*"

I named my good friend, Mr. Ellice, as one of my sureties, and Miss Magnet as the other, and after I had spent nearly five hours in durance, I was given a release by the conjoint arrival of my willing benefactors.

Mr. Ellice was, I think, disturbed at my misfortune to a greater degree than even I myself was; while Miss Magnet seemed scarce to understand that anything particular was amiss.

I could not help being amused to observe the old lady's strange conduct in the police-office, as she, while in communion with the official of the hour, put a great many questions to him which were quite irrelevant to the business in hand, and, on being prompted in the matter, positively made the place echo again with her resentful shrill voice.

I was very glad when at length matters were satisfactorily arranged, as I had been keenly apprehensive that, instead of my finding in this instance a surety for my release, I should have the unhappiness to find myself the medium of adding another prisoner to the day's list.

The excitement attendant on my enlargement caused my attention to be so distracted that I never thought whither I was going, and only when the carriage in which I rode was drawn up in front of Miss Magnet's house did I become precisely aware of the actual state of things.

Mr. Ellice was thoughtfully silent while on the way from the police-office to Eaton Place, and his abstraction did not decrease when he was comfortably seated in Miss Magnet's drawing-room with a fragrant cup of tea in his hand.

The reverend gentleman had arranged to stay over-night in the house of his relative, and was, I have reason to believe, stimulated to that resolution by the benevolent thought that it was his bounden duty to see to the planning out of a future good course for my unworthy self. The good minister, despite all his natural large-heartedness, must surely, in secret, have wished me at the world's end, for, in truth, I was by this time a most undesirable companion for his son, and altogether unworthy to have communion with his pure-souled daughter. Yet here was this true Christian, at the very first summons given him of my danger, promptly by my side, taking me by the hand, and exhorting me to be of firm courage.

The minister's conduct awakened within me a new feeling of philanthropy, for I learned that he had come to me on this occasion at great inconvenience to himself, and I had only too sufficient reason to consider myself now no longer entitled to expect his assistance. My good friend expressed himself as quite annoyed to think that my uncle and I should have fallen out with each other as we had done, and he cried shame on both of us in the matter. Then the worthy minister went on to say that he could scarcely comprehend a bitter quarrel to take

place between two gentlemen of good education because both desired the hand of a nameless girl, who was performing at weekly wages on a public stage.

"Your uncle," remarked the censor, with grave air, "belongs not to the present age, but has all his sympathies transferred to an era when the only dignities in the world were those of knowledge, strength, and comeliness, and he, therefore, may be deserving more of pity than of condemnation. But for you, Frank,"—here the good man paused to look at me with sorrowing eyes, and impressively held aloft his palm, while proceeding to say,—"there is no such consideration; for you, in every sense, belong to these Christian days, and so well know the class distinctions which, to proper society, rule as law that is ordered from on high. And again, sir, I should say you are not yet prepared to take a young woman of your own rank in marriage; while for you, in your present circumstances, to wed one quite beneath you in point of rank, would be, to say the least of it, most reprehensible conduct."

"I do not know that I desire to wed—immediately," I answered, miserably ashamed to confess the fact that the devotion which had already cost me so much, never had

been received the least encouragement from its idol.

"Then, sir," cried Mr. Ellice, with angry impatience, "in Heaven's name, I would ask you to say what you propose to do in your present amorous chase?"

My worthy friend never before this time had addressed me in terms of such severity; and his action was in accordance with his speech, for he started up from his chair, and swept the air with his hand, suggestive of his necessity to relieve his feelings by some muscular free play.

"God bless us, minister!" cried Miss Magnet, who had been nodding her shrewd old head in smiling approval while the reverend gentleman was temperately lecturing me, and now, startled by the sudden vehement action of the declaimer, was sympathetically moved to follow his example, and rise from her seat.

Mr. Ellice soon recovered himself, on seeing the nervous excitement wrought by his agency upon the feeble old lady, and he then, like the true gentleman that he was, hastened to make amends for his impulsive action.

The Christian minister was not, of course, to be expected to concede any toleration to my uncertainty as to what I had proposed for

myself in my persistent attentions to the beautiful young actress; yet there was a good deal to be said in palliation of my indecision in regard to that matter, for, in fact, while I was debarred from the contemplation of anything like a speedy marriage by two most serious wants—namely, the want of means and, again, the want of compliance of the adored one to the receiving of my attentions—I was still quite unable to take a rational view of the matter, and felt simply compelled to go on in my folly.

"Why, this boy must be mad," said Mr. Ellice, concernedly, to Miss Magnet. I was not quite sure but that he was then stating the actual fact.

"Mad!" echoed the old lady, with assured air. "Ah, that he is."

I now addressed my two friends, reminding them that the question in the forefront of all my difficulties was, not whether I was sane or otherwise, but what should be done towards defeating the machinations of my uncle against my character. When I had so said, the old lady started up again, and exclaimed that my base, designing uncle should presently find himself smitten hip and thigh for his dastardly attempt. While now I felt grateful to think

that my indignant benefactress was resolved to take an active part in my battle, I was a little dispirited by the reflection that furious words seldom herald well-judged action.

Mr. Ellice, I could plainly see, was by no means enthusiastic in my cause; but I had no doubt he would be found at my side whenever danger to me might happen to be pressing. The discreet gentleman was careful to give me delicately to understand that my presence in his own household was then undesirable; and, indeed, I was inwardly convinced that, under the existing circumstances, my room was properly to be preferred to my company in the family *penetralia* of my estimable reverend friend.

"I think you should consult your friend, Mr. Spinner, upon your present emergency," remarked the rector, with tone of voice betraying his incertitude of my existing relations with the gentleman in question. "He is a member of the Bar; and being well affected towards you, as I trust he is, he would conduct your case *con amore*."

"Let us have a proper man for our business, and none of your boys," cried Miss Magnet, who evidently thought that full manhood was only attained at somewhere near forty years of age.

I could not help laughing outright at the contemptuous emphasis which the old lady devoted to her last word, considering that I myself was necessarily included in the class of her scorn.

The conviction was now forced home to my mind that to have my case carried through in a capable manner I must not myself conduct it, but must entrust it to the care of some trained lawyer. I was not willing, however, to accept Spinner's assistance in this matter, and I now stated my objection, but without making any mention of the reasons I had for it.

The rector shook his head reprovingly at me, and said he felt grieved to hear that I would not confide in the man whom I had so often proclaimed to be my most esteemed familiar. I felt sure, however, that the reverend gentleman, while thus admonishing me, was sufficiently well aware of my irresponsibility in the matter of his regret."

"This boy," cried the old lady, abruptly, pointing with a long, bony finger at me, "wants better help than your Spinner could give him.

"He wants good help," replied Mr. Ellice, with slightly ruffled voice, "and that is what I wish him to get."

"Then seek out a grown man for him," said the old lady, letting fall her head, and speaking with that absentness which sometimes is seen to suddenly afflict a very old person.

The rector looked askance at his dear old friend, and his face assumed a compassionate expression, as he beheld the time-worn form sitting in bent attitude, mumbling some words to herself, with eyes directed upon the ground.

"With God's help," said the good man, piously, "I trust always to fulfil my duty."

"Well, minister," said the old lady, looking up, with suddenly recalled attention, "I hope to see that in this case handsomely done."

"I shall only do what I feel to be right," replied Mr. Ellice, with slightly offended voice. He then stood up, asking that he should be allowed to go to bed.

The old lady thereupon declared that she herself desired to go to bed. Being informed that my own couch for the night was already prepared in this same house, I was only too glad to follow the present example of my seniors. On parting we all shook hands, and cordially wished good-night to each other.

When I was alone in my own bed-chamber, I thought over the conversation which had just

taken place. I plainly saw that my two excellent friends were certainly not acting in anything like unison, and I feared this want of harmonious co-operation on the part of these my best friends was to be attributed to that evil influence which seemed to bear upon every person taking an interest in me. The rector, I reflected, had always treated me in much the same spirit as he had bestowed towards his own son; and his love for me was surely a thing still of lively being, as was evidenced by his present generous response to my call for assistance. But while I saw proof of the continued vitality of his friendship, I was convinced that the repeated counsel of his prudent helpmate in adverse spirit to me had succeeded in introducing a leaven of worldly discretion to his kindliness for me. This leaven, like a useful salt or spirit put into a delicate natural product to give it strength, had exorcised the ethereal essence of the primitive conditions. Miss Magnet, on the other hand, had evidently been able, happily for myself, to preserve her love for me perfectly undefiled; but, while I entertained a profound feeling of gratitude that I should be given the loving regard of a noble-hearted old lady, I was painfully conscious that I not only had done nothing to deserve it, but

actually had behaved myself in a manner which entitled me to reprobation and dishonour. I knew, only too well, that I was totally unworthy of her regard, and I almost felt annoyed with her for putting me to the acute misery of hating myself.

I could not in the least discover why Miss Magnet should have taken me to her heart, and, being self-conscious of my utter undeservedness of this exceeding favour, I loathed myself to such keen extent that I actually, while undressing for bed, turned the looking-glass, to prevent the possibility of a vivid realization of my own hateful being by the sight of my reflection in the mirror.

I crept into bed with a saddened heart, and lay awake many hours thinking over what should be my plan of life, and making many determinations which were only destined to last until the morning.

Sleep seemed to have deserted me, for I lay awake thinking, one hour after the other, until I heard three o'clock proclaimed through the awful darkness, when my inert watchfulness became suddenly aroused by some mysterious sounds at my room door, as of a stealthy hand seeking to obtain an entrance. Presently I observed a ray of bright light falling athwart the

floor of my room, proceeding from the narrow space between the door and its jamb.

I sat up in bed in anxious alarm, waiting to discover what new danger was threatening me now.

I had not bolted my room door. In my present alarm, I was hesitating between the impulse to jump out of bed and anticipate the apparent intention of my untimely visitant, and the passing resolution to await the unchecked decision of events, when my doubt was brought to an issue by the door being pushed open, and a gaunt, white-robed figure, bearing a light, entering in beside me. One throb of mortal fear passed through me, and then succeeded the intelligent comprehension that this ghastly night-walker was no other than my dear old lady in a state of somnambulism.

Quickly I recollected the advisability there is to avoid any rudeness in awaking a person locked in this restless trance, and, with humane consideration, I laid myself quietly back again upon my couch, with the determination of remaining quiescent in this strange and startling scene. I was almost fascinated to look upon the weird face of the unnatural wanderer, with her motionless, staring eyes made awfully conspicuous by the presence then

of dark shadows around them, being partly natural, and enhanced in effect by contrast with the white drapery, and partly lent by the cause of lamplight.

After my first instinctive shock was over, I was able to control my feelings, and so to remain perfectly still. I still, no doubt, felt uneasy, and, to a certain extent, apprehensive, but I was no longer sorely afraid. I had seen this lady on a former occasion in a state of somnambulism, though at a much further distance than now, and that first sight had served to wean me to calmly bear with the contemplation of such abnormal display of human restlessness.

The afflicted old lady was evidently aware of being near me, but her strangely-lent knowledge had not been given her in anything like a complete form, for she kept talking to herself, with perfectly audible accents, about matters which were unmistakably dear to her own mind, though of a strictly private nature. Now it was revealed to me, only too plainly, that my benefactress at heart was warmly disposed towards me, for she uttered over me words of affection such as my dear, late mother was wont to use in my honour at bedtime. But, apart from the old lady's dreamful words,

the fact of her abounding affection for me was surely proved by her act of moving, even in her sleep, to visit me in my bed-room. The poor, good old soul hovered about me for some five or six minutes, holding her lamp above her head, and then departed, closing the door behind her as carefully as she had opened it.

One particular expression she had uttered dwelt within my memory, never to be effaced. It was this,—"My darling girl must wed my joe." I sadly guessed the dear girl referred to was Emily Ellice, and the joe none other than my undeserving self.

The next morning, while the good rector and I were sitting together at breakfast, the servant came to us with the surprising information that my brother from Ceylon was then waiting in this very house.

Mr. Ellice, with his natural hearty manner, instructed that my brother should be shown at once in beside us; and presently the welcome visitor appeared *in propriâ personâ.*

The rush of tender feeling which arose in my heart at the moment of surprise when I was waiting for my long-absent brother's appearance, nearly overpowered my self-control. I had been obliged to gulp a good mouthful of tea to save myself from involuntarily sobbing

outright; but when the man of moving interest was visible unto my tearful eyes, my heart fairly welled up with affectionate laughter, in lieu of the first disposition to sentimental weakness.

I had often refreshed my memory with the picture of the once-familiar lineaments of my brother Edward, remembering him as a shapely, active man, of middle stature; and my imagination having been given impulse by the medium of a highly finished portrait of this same man, painted upon an ivory medallion, which I retained in my possession, I had, in time, come to regard him as a living Antinous—a very type of noble-appearing humanity.

Alas! my cherished remembrance of the dear man, who now bodily stood before me, had simply no affinity whatever with the actual fact; for Edward's present appearance was after that of a Bacchus, a brick-red man, with gross proportions, gorbellied and bolster-limbed, with hands showing dimples where knuckles should have been, and a round, cheery countenance, having a second chin, and whose cheeks were puffed out like the pictured ones of Æolus, the god of the winds.

"Frank, I believe," he cried, with genial

though surely unnecessary voice of doubtful inquiry, extending to me his ample fist.

I smiled in cordial recognition, and bade him welcome; though if I had repeated his own words, substituting his name for mine, the sense would have been quite justified in my case. At the first moment of recognition, I felt, curiously enough, an unreasoning resentment at my brother for having allowed himself to be blown out to his present Falstaffian similitude. I suppose my resentment arose chiefly on account of the cruelly sudden and total dispossession from my mind of a charming ideal form by the presentment of this the actual figure of my fond regard.

"I am glad to see you looking so hearty," said the amiable minister, with a smile of amusement. "Why, Edward, Ceylon seems to have agreed with you to considerable purpose."

"Yes, sir," returned my corpulent brother, with that tone of voice, expressive of self-satisfaction, very common to the *genus homo* of the United States of America.

"What has made you grow so fat, Edward?" I inquired, unable any longer to hide my chagrin at his inordinate obesity.

"Why, good feeding and an easy mind," he

answered, with an accompanying playful slap upon his capacious paunch, and smiling with such resolute good humour, that the rector and I were beguiled into gleefulness.

"Sit down, and have breakfast with us," said the minister, in a jovial tone.

"I will," said the manly Cupid, with as much heartiness as a man will exhibit who cheerfully accepts a pressing job of work.

Then he seated himself at the table, discreetly selecting an arm-chair for his seat.

"I think I shall do now, until lunch-time," at length said Edward, after having nearly cleared the table of victuals, which had constituted a moderately heavy load.

"Pray don't stint yourself," said Mr. Ellice, with that keen degree of humour in which the chief enjoyment is reserved for the self-appreciation of the humorist.

"No fear," answered my well-fed brother, with a wink, as smiling he shook his head in a very knowing manner.

Then he proceeded to inform us that he had arrived in London on the preceding day at a somewhat late hour, when he had put up at an hotel for the night, and that he had called that morning at the house in Chelsea, where he had learnt of my quarrel with my uncle, and had

been told by the revived Serang himself of the particular address at which I should either be found or heard of.

I was almost amused by the particularly easy terms which my brother employed when referring to the quarrel I had had with my uncle, and of which he had learned only the broad fact from the cunning factotum. He was pleased to call this really bitter contention "a little row," and, when referring to my uncle personally, he often employed the vulgar term "old man."

I really cannot even now understand how circumstances had conspired to vulgarize my brother in the paradise upon earth where he had made his home for many years. He never had shown the least tendency to grossness of any kind while he was under the immediate care of his parents. But it must have been, I suppose, that he carried grossness latent within him, like gout, and, on coming under some occult powerful influences, his innate indelicacy became rapidly developed.

"Oho!" he uttered, when the rector had informed him of the chief point of difference betwixt my uncle and me. "They quarrel about a young actress, and the old man claps

Frank in gaol; and so, by-and-by, there will be the devil to pay."

"There is certain to be further trouble," said the minister, evidently scandalized at my brother's freedom of remark.

"Frank had much better set to trying to make money than to play the fool as he is doing now," remarked Edward, bluntly. His words, though lightly uttered, smote me to the quick. The truth suddenly occurred to me that I was bent upon the chase of a phantom.

"I think it would be fortunate for Frank," said the rector, with serious air, as though a new light had suddenly broke in upon his perceptions, "if you, Edward, could find a place for him out at Ceylon."

"Not so," cried my good old lady, now entering the room. "What is Ceylon, that it should get our dear boy?"

"I myself hail from there, madam," said Edward, rising to pay courtesy to the mistress of the house. "I am Edward Amor."

The old lady bowed to my brother, and her eyes fairly twinkled to look upon him. She never before had seen this man; but I, on one occasion, had shown her his portrait, and had then described him according to his original

model. Now, as she looked upon the man-mountain who had announced himself as being Edward Amor, and considering him as that brother of mine whom I had almost likened to Adonis, she must have thought me an unscrupulous impostor, or, at least, as possessed of a self-delusive imagination. "He must be a fine-looking lad," she had said of this individual of my encomium on one occasion, when his portrait was under inspection, and I was dilating upon his presumed personal graces. "Just like his late majesty, George the Fourth, before he grew out of shape with fat." I had then gladly assented to the opinion that he had a striking resemblance of feature to the portraits of the last King George as a young gallant. Now here was the man himself who, in his absence, had been likened to the very god of comeliness, and found to be, in fact, all enlarged out of his natural form, as much like the accepted presentment of Adam as a prize pig is to its own prototype. I anxiously entertained the hope that the aged lady, whose eyes now scanned my enlarged brother, had failed to retain the clear remembrance of my mistaken description of him.

But great was my mortification when the shrewd old lady turned her eyes upon me, and

conveyed, by her deeply intelligent expression, that my hollow words of praise had not been forgotten. With a meaning shake of her wise old head, she also gave me to understand that she was now inclined to hold my veracity at a cheap rate.

"There's room enough, I dare say," remarked my brother, pleasantly, to Miss Magnet, "for Frank over at Ceylon."

"Not, I should say," answered the old lady, with unwarrantable freedom, "while you are there."

Edward, fortunately for himself, failed to detect the intention of the verbal dart now delivered at him, and accepted it, foolishly enough, as a flattering attention to himself.

Mr. Ellice, with proper tact, now interposed his word, inquiring of my brother if it was his intention to return to Ceylon. Edward answered promptly that he certainly should return to Ceylon. Then, with refreshing candour, he went on to say that he liked the place, and that the place liked him.

"I am a little king there," averred this ingenuous vagrant. "I have a court and an army in a peculiar fashion, and I don't mind letting you know that I mean to

take back with me a queen to share in my privileges."

The minister laughed, well pleased to hear my brother disclose his state and great intention thus unreservedly.

Edward laughed too, but apparently for no other reason than that laughing was his delight, and at present he was able to indulge in it.

"I shall try to recommend you, Edward, to some very nice English girl," cried the minister, in the midst of his glee.

"Do, if you please," replied Edward, in positive tears, and almost choking from the violence of his doltish fit of merriment.

My brother, in his present fit of laughter, had been provoked to it—easily enough, no doubt—by the minister's example; and the provoker, after his own first leading impulse was spent, immediately found himself carried on to another spasmodic fit of joviality, but now as a follower instead of a leader.

The old lady was amazed at the vociferous gaiety of these two of her guests, and, not being herself humorously inclined, grew angry with my brother. She morosely demanded of him the cause of his vehement fit of laughter.

Edward thereupon, with merrily-broken accents, said that he laughed because he was

happy, and further stated that, if any better reason were required, it must be found on his behalf by some one wiser than himself.

"Is life then such a vain thing," censoriously said the serious old lady, "that a man should be justified in laughing his time away?"

"Laughter is meant always to be a joyous thing," interposed the generous-hearted minister. "And it must surely be pleasant in the regard of Heaven, for it is never in fellowship with evil."

"Well said, minister," cried my brother, with grateful expression. "And I can prove your words by stating the fact that, I never yet have found a discontented ship or estate but that there was a tyrant at the head of affairs."

"I promise you a good wife, Edward," gaily said Mr. Ellice, in the exuberance of his pleasant fellowship with my laughter-loving brother. "Your late excellent father was just such another man as yourself."

"Was the father as big round as the son?" inquired the old lady, with slightly sarcastic voice, making, while she spake, a circular motion with both hands to demonstrate her own idea of Edward's extraordinary bulk, and

which idea, in its practical illustration, would have meant a man weighing as many pounds perhaps as an ordinary-sized horse.

At the moment when there seemed to be imminent a battle of wits, there happened a diversion in the form of a servant entering the room, with the astounding intelligence that Miss Melrose had called, and was waiting to see me in a small room styled the reception-room, situated near the front door.

"What! The young actress herself?" uttered Mr. Ellice, with accents of mixed surprise, looking at me in desire for my explanation of this strange visit.

I certainly was unable to account for the visit now paid to me, and my feelings on the subject were only to be compared to those of a man suddenly caught in a cyclone at sea, when fear, hope, and despair will be found to alternate in his heart. I felt almost lost in bewilderment, on trying, within my own mind, to assign the cause which had led Miss Melrose to take her present extraordinary step. I looked in a state of dumbfounderment at my friends, from one to the other, and they one and all stared back at me with similar expression to my own.

My brother was the first to recover compo-

sure of mind, when he, with an ill-considered tone of banter, put the question to me if I should prefer to receive my visitor by proxy. I felt so much annoyed by his discourteous levity, that I could not trust myself to answer him.

"Now, Frank, beware!" cried Mr. Ellice, warningly, as I went to meet my enchantress. But the admonishing clergyman might have spoken to the winds with as much hopefulness of effect as in saying what he said to me, for all the wariness that lay within my power to exercise under these circumstances.

Now, with keen anxiety to know what fortune was awaiting me, I felt my heart bounding in a very terrible manner within my breast, as I hastened along the passage leading to that room wherein was the fair arbitress of my destiny.

I fear that my fair visitor must have seen more clearly than ever how strong was her power over me, for I came into her presence, and stood before her with my mouth open, unable to speak, and gasping for my breath like a carp out of water.

"I am sorry to have disturbed you so much," said she, with a look of pity in her lovely blue eyes.

I presently observed her nostrils occasionally dilate slightly, and inferred from that nervous indication that she was suffering under some anxiety. I smiled as best I could, and held out my hand without speaking a word.

"I heard of your great trouble, and I wished to see you," proceeded my fair visitor, with a sudden flush mounting upon her face. Then she took both my hands in hers, in the kindest possible manner, and went on to explain that late on the preceding night she had heard of my arrest, and had gone that morning to the police-office to try and get an interview with me; when, learning that I had been liberated, she hastily decided to take the step which now she had carried into effect. "Am I not bold?" she inquired, archly, on concluding the recital of her two important visits on my behalf.

I raised her delicately formed right hand to my lips, and kissed it—gloved as it was; and the fierce turmoil in my veins at that moment arrived at the highest degree which, I believe, was possible for me to bear while retaining my sober senses.

"You called for me at the police-office, did you?" said I, trying, with, perhaps, excusable hypocrisy, to attach the greatest importance to

her visit of inquiry after me there, when I well knew her present visit would certainly be considered of the greatest consequence in the general opinion.

"Yes," she answered, with charming *naïveté*. "And the policeman told me you were here; and I came on to you."

"A thousand thanks for your exceeding kindness," said I, with my breast heaving in a pleasantly melancholy gratitude from the thought that I should have been so richly paid attention to, after I had concluded that I stood without one single friend.

"Oh, Mr. Amor," cried the fair girl, with a merry laugh like a trill of music; and for an instant appearing in her usual unconstrained nature, "you speak now like mamma, or like our stage people, to offer a thousand thanks when one would quite meet the occasion."

"You come then to tease me," I remarked, mustering up courage enough to pretend easiness of mind, and yet almost consumed with the burning desire to know the gist of the purpose that had induced this lovely maiden thus persistently to seek me in my present shelter.

"It may be I shall tease you when I tell you what I have come here to say," she replied, casting her glance downwards, and speaking,

with a slightly saucy smile upon her lips, in the manner of one who has some news of importance to tell to another, and which news will in all probability be received ungraciously.

"Is it about my uncle?"

"Yes."

"Pray, then, speak out plainly."

"Well—you know he has sent me an offer of marriage?"

"Well?" said I, interrogatively, feeling at this point an insufferable choking dryness in my mouth. I was still able, however, to maintain my mask of calmness, and even to add a little supplementary smile to the considerate show of venial deceit.

"Well!" answered she, petulantly, "I am strongly advised to accept it."

"By your uncle, I suppose?"

"By my uncle; by my mamma; and by all my friends in the theatre whom I have spoken to on the subject," she said, with resentful emphasis.

I could remain no longer in a counterfeit calmness. "Oh, my dear girl!" I cried, almost beside myself at the news. "Have you thought what a monstrous thing it would be for you, a young and beautiful maiden, to unite yourself with a sickly, bad old man? It would be a

flagrant offence both against the laws of morality and nature."

"Yet you persist in seeking me yourself," said she, with retaliatory voice, "when you are perfectly aware that I could not give you my love. Oh, it is all very well for you to say I should not be your uncle's wife; but you must not forget that, while I am very poor, he is very rich; and that he is certain to prove remarkably kind to me, although he has shown spite against you. Besides, there is the fact—all in favour of the thing—that I am quite free in my heart, and my suitor never has been married."

Every word uttered by my fair idol in extenuation of her proposed marriage with my ill-conditioned uncle struck a pang through my heart. I felt that she, no doubt, was right in saying I was selfish in my advice, and that I had to a certain extent committed myself by my personal courtship; but I could not bring myself to reason on the subject, it seemed to me so entirely undeserving of being spoken of in any other spirit than that of impatient reprobation.

"It would, I firmly believe, be for your own benefit as well as for mine," presently she continued, cutting me sorer than ever, in her

manifest present attempt to secure my favour by the agency of an appeal to my self-interest. Then she went on to explain that she intended to make it a *sine quâ non* to her acceptance of my uncle's offer that he should at once abandon his persecution of me, with a full apology in open court, and afterwards should pay over to me, as a solatium to my wounded hopes and feelings, the sum of one thousand pounds.

I indignantly told the fair proposer of mercenary terms in my favour, that I should scorn to accept either my uncle's apology or his alms; and I also reproached her for unwarrantably entertaining so mean an opinion of my disposition as to suppose I might accept her scheme of reconcilement with my uncle. It was, indeed, a sad humiliation for me now to find all my painfully sustained aspirations made light of by the very being for whose love I had sacrificed nearly all my worldly interests.

She was evidently lost in surprise at my stern refusal to acquiesce in her proposal. I dare say she thought me remarkably blind to my own interests, to discountenance a scheme whereby I might probably be benefited to the extent of getting a solid indemnity from my uncle, together with his apology for the pains he had caused me.

"My dear boy—" said she, persuasively.

"Why do you call me so," I cried, interrupting her, "when you mean nothing by it?"

"It is from use, I suppose," she remarked, with a blush of slight confusion. Then, after a short reflective pause, she added, hastily, —"But, indeed, I do mean something by it, for I mean to offer you my very sincere friendship, and surely that is something—is it not?"

I felt myself as a slave, a devotee, to this ephemeric fair piece of mortal clay, and I feared she knew that I was her bondsman. With my whole heart, I replied to her playful, but yet gentle, question, that in my appreciation her friendship should count, indeed, as of a rare value.

"Now, Mr. Amor," said she, with most delicious accents of friendly regard, "listen quietly to me."

"Call me Frank, if you will," I exclaimed, impulsively, feeling it to be happiness alone to enjoy the privilege of communion with this frail-looking thing of power. "I can surely be as a brother to you, if I may not be in any dearer relationship."

"Well, then, Frank," she said, with a sweet blush, and a pleased, thoughtful smile; and now, touching my arm, evidently unconsciously, with

the tips of her right-hand fingers, "when you judge me, pray do not overlook the fact that I owe very, very much both to my uncle and my mother, and that we are all at present quite in a state of bankruptcy. And, then, you must not forget that I am given now an opportunity of setting right our present position without any sacrifice of honour."

I could not help suspecting that my fair confidante had been influenced in the matter of her present interest almost entirely by the advice of her unscrupulous male relative.

I spoke out plainly what I thought to be the nature of the favour shown by Captain Melrose to the step proposed for her, and, in the course of my invective against the self-seeking man of war, becoming inflamed by the recollection of his abominable disregard of honour and integrity, I denounced him as one who would scruple not in the least to sacrifice the whole future prospects of happiness of a young soul to benefit his own immediate worldly interests.

"I cannot agree with you in your opinion of my uncle Jack," she replied, with an objective shake of her charming head. "I must tell you that he has many a time saved mamma and me from absolute want; and I am quite certain

the poor man, while helping us, was often himself put to sore straits in raising the needful funds."

"He must know you never could love Mr. Gall."

"Of course he knows that," said the beautiful worldling, impatient at my persistent refusal to admit any palliation in the matter. "Yet he no doubt expects that I could surely fulfil the proper duties of a wife without that love which you so much insist upon. I, at least, could be kind to Mr. Gall; and then, also, I could repay my mother and my uncle for their goodness to me. And besides," she added, with a serio-playful manner, "I should be a real good friend to you, Mr. Frank, if you only consented to allow me."

I do not know but that I should have retained the attractive maiden at my side for the whole day if she had left the limitation of our conference to my sole discretion, as it was simply torture for me to anticipate her departure while she should remain in her present determination. She, however, took the initiative of our separation upon herself, and now announced her desire to return home.

When she was standing up to depart, with her hand in mine, I ventured to ask her if she

believed I had been guilty of the infamous act imputed to me. With an assuring smile she made answer that she believed me to be perfectly innocent of any criminal conduct.

"Yet," said I, thinking to confuse my fair one at the last moment, "you know that he who has laid this lying charge upon me is the very man whom you propose to favour so exceedingly."

"He has laid that charge," she answered, unhesitatingly, looking me fair in the face, "because he has been so advised by the stupid police officers. My uncle explained to me such was the case."

"Oh, Eve, Eve!" I cried, passionately, unable to speak in temperate reason a moment longer, "for the love of Heaven do not think of marrying that bad man!"

"Oh, Frank, Frank!" she replied, with pleasant, mocking voice, "I must tell you that Heaven is not so one-sided in such matters as you seem to think, and that it may likely be the very thing you now denounce will prove the means of changing your wicked uncle into a pattern man, and a good friend to yourself."

"You torture me," groaned I, in misery of spirit, as the conviction was forced upon me

that I had made all my prodigal votive offerings in vain.

"Pooh, nonsense!" she uttered, with rallying tone, bestowing upon me a slight, playful tap with her parasol.

I made what effort I was capable of to rally myself, and presently was able to put a gloss of rationality upon my deportment, when, with a sickly kind of smile, I remarked I should certainly take the liberty of making a return call upon her whenever the case now pending betwixt my uncle and me should be brought to a decision.

She laughed on hearing me state my intention, and, with friendly, cautionary voice, reminded me that, after this time, I could not reasonably hope to be joyfully received at Antonia Cottage unless I brought an olive-branch with me.

I proceeded to address myself, with somewhat mean artifice, to ascertain how far friendly relations had been established betwixt my uncle and the family of which Eve was a member; and to my inquiry if she still was attending at the theatre, she, with a look of surprise, answered that her constant attendance at the theatre was a matter of absolute necessity, seeing that her whole maintenance depended

on her professional occupation. I then, with that selfish presumption which comes from a morbid jealousy, ventured to say that in all likelihood my uncle, while seeking to enrich his own life with the consortship of my fair visitor, had no thought of the severe terms which beset her in the performance of her present daily duties.

I immediately perceived I had committed myself to stupidly impertinent utterance, and felt deeply sorry for it. My sharp-witted companion, though no doubt aware of the mental throe which had prompted me to talk, so to say, at large, yet thought fit to administer to me as severe a rebuke as she could well have put her tongue to. "Mr. Frank Amor," she concluded, sternly looking me in the face, and laying the ferule of her parasol with impressive manner upon my arm, "I must tell you that, if you dare speak again to me as you have done now, I shall certainly bid you good-bye for ever."

I was charmed to observe the noble independence of mind which characterized this beautiful being; but, at the same, I was pained to see that ascendency had been given to mere creature regards in her mind from her life-long, stern experience of chastely maintained poverty.

I hastened to offer an humble apology for the unwitting offence I had given, and was shortly delighted to observe the lines of resentment fade from the brow of the offended fair one, and the angry fire die out of her cerulean eyes, and to hear her voice, with restored sweet tone, proclaim that the grace of forgiveness was accorded me.

I kissed her hand, which she offered to me in token of reconciliation; and now, seeing she was anxious to depart, I summoned an attendant to open the outer door.

As the servant opened the door to let her out, who should be standing on the step but Miss Ellice, with her brother Hugh at her back. Emily was evidently surprised at this unexpected meeting, and looked with curious interest at Eve Melrose.

I cannot remember ever having seen a woman look at another with such intense curiosity as did Emily upon the wondering Eve. Hugh stood still, agape, like one suddenly struck with a great astonishment.

The picture as presented by the two maidens contemplating each other was a remarkably striking one; the one girl abiding in the shade, looking amazed to find herself an almost fascinating object of interest; the other one resting

in the glorious sunlight, angel-like in appearance, but expressing towards her gentle neighbour an extreme curiosity of perfectly human disposition.

I recovered my presence of mind only by the timely prompting of the sharp-witted young actress, who, all unconscious of the cause of interest in the new comers, administered to me a furtive stimulating tap with her ready parasol; and then I, with very awkward and inappropriately solemn manner, greeted my two unwelcome friends. The spell thus broken, a general activity of movement succeeded. Emily spoke hurriedly a few words of interrogative import, having relation to the whereabouts of her father, and, without giving me time to answer, swept by me, and was anon lost to view. Hugh, with the natural instinct of a young, ingenuous man, lingered in his progress, evidently desiring to be introduced to the superlatively attractive bud of womanhood who had entranced his attention. The fair one stared back ungraciously at her simple admirer, and presently turned to me with a disdainful look on her superb countenance, and abruptly wishing me good-bye, went on her way.

"The young actress, I suppose?" said

Hugh, as soon as the servant had closed the door, and retired out of hearing.

I perceived that my impulsive young friend was already touched with that subtle power which had, by this time, obtained a complete mastery over me, for his eyes were fixed in a vacant stare, and his lips were parted wide.

"Now for my penance," said I, taking the arm of my youthful friend, and then walked with him into the presence of the conclave.

My brother was the first to distress me, crying out, with a pleasantly sarcastic voice, that he hoped I had not hurried my pleasant interview for my waiting friends' sake.

"Mr. Frank has spent a good hour," said the old lady, consulting her great gold watch, "in speaking with that forward hussy, who has bewitched him."

My face burned with indignation to find myself, and my absent loadstar, made butts of for free comment, and, without doubt, I should have retaliated on the offenders had not the good rector intervened with his prudent word to save my tantalized feelings from becoming worked up into an ungovernable state. In assuasive language the minister requested me to afford the due explanation of how it had

come to pass that the bewitchful player had sought me in this house, when she must have known the impropriety of her visit.

I felt myself in a dilemma how to make the desired explanation without, at the same time, laying myself open to the charge of having abused the confidence of my late visitor. Perceiving, however, that I was bound to afford my hostess some explanation in the matter, I proceeded to make the evasive statement that the chief object of Miss Melrose in seeking me at this place was to condole with me on my recent misfortune.

"A right-cunning minx!" uttered Miss Magnet, with knowing emphasis; and then, with a shrewdly thoughtful shake of her head, she added,—"Oh, commend me to the stage for a school for artfulness."

"She wishes to hook Frank, I suppose?" said my brother, who knew simply nothing whatever of the matter. "Is she nice-looking?"

"Nice-looking!" repeated Hugh, with that peculiar intonation which denotes that words are wanting to the utterer wherewith to fitly describe the merits of some subject under criticism. "Why—there—I never in all my days—"

"That will be enough, Hugh," interrupted the father, with reproving gesture.

"The jade!" muttered Miss Magnet, in a soliloquizing tone, after observing the short-lived enthusiasm of generous Hugh.

I could bear no longer tamely to hear my idol stigmatized by contemptuous terms, even though the offence were being committed by a dame stricken by years almost into a state of dotage, and, stepping forward, I declared that my fair, reviled friend was neither jade, minx, nor hussy, but a dutiful girl, well entitled to the highest respect. "Neither is she cunning," I concluded, magniloquently, "for she has come to me when she might easily have induced me to go to her."

The generous rector was good enough to state that he was willing to allow full grace to the young actress, and, therefore, should not blame her for paying me a visit to sympathize with me on my evil fortune. Upon this, the hostile criticism upon the bold fair one was silenced, for the new apologist of her unconventional visit was empowered to command a respectful deference to his opinion by virtue both of his high profession and his noble individual character.

"The young person in question," said the

liberal-hearted rector, "being accustomed, by reason of her profession, to peculiar ways of life, may not have been able to see the least impropriety in an act which, to us conventional folks, would seem quite a breach of polite etiquette."

Expressive glances being now in active exchange between the two ladies present, denoting that they, though willing to remain in silence under the present decision of the disputed question, were by no means convinced of its reasonableness, the good man prudently spake no more upon the delicate subject, but went on to admonish his audience to let the present matter of interest rest as he had decided it. Then he proceeded to argue out the all-important question how to get me triumphantly extricated from the toils of my enemies, advancing his own opinion with regard to the new question, that I should be expeditiously taken on to a very worthy doctor in law whose opinion was often in request by gospellers who were wishful of any appeal to the presiding genius of *lex terræ*.

"I have omitted to mention the fact," said I, considering it advisable to add a little to my former explanation, "that Miss Melrose brought a message to me."

"You ought to have stated so before," said the rector, gravely. "And what answer did you make?"

"That I should refuse to parley any terms whatever with my uncle."

Mr. Ellice shook his head with an air of reprehension, and remarked that he could not think of any benefit as possible to accrue to other than the lawyers in the case of my deciding to risk extremities with my uncle in our cause of quarrel. He was proceeding further to state his views on the matter, when the old lady jumped up impulsively from her seat, and cried out that it surely was an offence in the sight of Heaven to treat amicably with hardened sinners.

He paused, when thus interrupted, and looked around as if to ascertain how the feeling of his company was inclined, and beholding his gentle daughter's expression unmistakably proclaiming her hearty concordance with Miss Magnet's protest, he offered no further remonstrance, but intimated, with a sigh, his willingness to go with the tide.

"I shall not mix myself up in this little shindy," intimated my brother.

"Certainly not," responded Mr. Ellice, heartily.

"The deuce take your shilly-shallying!" cried the old lady, with vehemence. "Rather would I have a man act as Judas than as Pilate."

"Pray let that remark pass unheeded," said the rector, addressing my brother. But, indeed, Edward scarce required any prompting to secure his indifference to the indirect insult offered him, for he seemed to look upon the matter as a joke.

"My brother has been fool enough," said the easy-tempered man, to my great confusion, and also to the abashment of the young lady of his audience and vexation of the elder one, "to give himself up to the chase of a pretty nautch-girl, and my uncle has gone in for the same hunt. And now that the two feather-heads have fallen foul of each other, should I mend matters by taking up a cudgel in favour of one of them?" Then the logical speaker paused, like Antony, for a reply; and thereupon the temperate-minded rector answered, saying he was convinced the quarrel-avoiding man was quite right in his conclusion.

The old lady here interposed her word, sharply reminding the self-elected estimators of the claims of my unhappy case, that surely they had grievously erred in their disregard of

the very important fact that, in the question under discussion, there was the terrible circumstance of my having been already subjected to the indignity of durance in a common prison.

Mr. Ellice now lost command of his temper, and exclaimed, excitedly, that while he counselled a policy of honourable conciliation, he never had departed in the least from his original purpose of obtaining for me, from my uncle, a full and comprehensive apology and substantial reparation. "But," concluded he, with very dogmatic voice, "if it should be found possible for us to obtain our demands at once, and so save expense and avoid publicity, why, let me ask, in the name of common sense, should we not avail ourselves of our lucky opportunity? And, again, I would ask, why should our dear visitor here enlist himself in a quarrel which, with regard to its merits, must be as incomprehensible to him as it is to—well, as it is to the rest of us?"

The minister, in his turn, now paused for a reply. Then Edward, with grateful remembrance of the favour recently shown him, cried out,—"Right you are!"

I had hitherto refrained from taking any prominent part in the discussion affecting my dearest interests, which had nearly set my best

friends by the ears; but now I thought fit to prompt them, that they were sadly departing from the question which was pressing for a solution.

"Just so," remarked the irrepressible old lady, sharply, with a glance, half of defiance and half of deference, to the minister; "and my opinion is that whoever is not with us is against us."

"There are more against us, I regret to say, than you have ever thought of," said Mr. Ellice, moodily, to my over-zealous advocate. Then he proceeded to relate that he had been cursorily informed at the police-office that from the fact of a vinaigrette, ascertained to be part of the property stolen from Miss Magnet, having been found with the articles belonging to my uncle unlawfully secreted in my chamber, there existed the probability of my being subjected to a second criminal charge in the event of the first one failing to be proved against me.

Miss Magnet sat listening to the fresh terrible news with a very sagacious look upon her withered face, and presently she exclaimed, in a tone of supreme scorn,—"The folly of men has surely come to a pretty pitch that they declare my vinaigrette to be unmatched in all the world!"

Now this expression of my good old friend strongly exemplified how almost unscrupulous woman can be when she champions a cause dear to her heart, for this ardent supporter of my good name had often, in my own hearing, scouted the idea of her choice personal properties being other than unique of their kind. I observed, when the staunch old lady had made her amiably deceitful remark, that the rector smiled to himself and shook his head very gravely.

"As for this second charge brought against Frank," cried Emily, with voice of sudden joyful recollection, "I can make it harmless to hurt him, and, perhaps, to rebound on his enemies."

Every one now strained forward, curious to learn what powerful means for my defence had suddenly come within the compass of the saintly maiden. Then she proceeded, with clear, pleasant voice, to describe that the mention of a vinaigrette having been found in my apparent possession suggested to her that this same vinaigrette must undoubtedly be the one she had missed now for some six weeks, and which article she had taken with her while making a visit, in company with her mother, at my uncle's house during my illness, but could not,

until now, decide whether her loss had occurred at the house, or in the hired vehicle which carried her thence to the railway station.

"Then it is aunt's, after all," remarked Mr. Ellice, in the spirit of ungenerous retaliation towards the now-confounded Miss Magnet. "I thought there could scarcely be other vinaigrettes in the world similar to hers."

"Yet, papa," said Emily, with a gentle playfulness of manner, inspired, no doubt, by the amiable desire to ease the rigour of her dear old friend's penalty, "it cannot strictly be considered aunt's vinaigrette, for she gave it me some three or four months ago."

No sooner had Emily uttered her little sophism than the old lady looked up in restored confidence, almost as if she considered the field to be again her own.

"Heaven has sent us this grace just at the right moment," said Mr. Ellice, bending his head, and uplifting his right hand, in token of homage to the great invisible Director. "We are so favoured because we have truth on our side."

Now, these words of the simply trustful pastor served to comfort us all, and made us mutually agreeable, and in our fortified spirit we each subscribed to the opinion that the evil

machinations of my enemies would surely be confounded. Even my brother, though having declared his determination of being quite impartial in this matter of contention, shared in the sudden enthusiasm which now had fallen amongst us. With generous impulse, he quitted his seat, and shook me by the hand in a way to suggest that I had unexpectedly become possessed of some exceeding good fortune.

"Now let in the light," cried the old lady, in that familiar devotional strain which characterizes the faith of the Christians, and which entitles that faith to be considered a religion pre-eminently of the heart.

The minister thereupon uncovered the windows, and the golden light of the spring day poured into the apartment, making our faces shine as those of the divine blest; and presently there appeared upon each illumined countenance a gladsome smile, which was born of the cheeriness latent in the air, and the good hope consequent on Emily's happy recollection.

The gentle young maiden, with a natural sympathy to the glorious, direct light from on high, took a seat in the immediate track of it, where it appeared a sa splendid luminous beam struck athwart through semi-darkness, and her ruddy tresses, in their intensity of hue and

gloss, scintillated under the dazzling light, and assumed the appearance of a crown of glory resting over her saint-like head.

My brother seemed as though entranced by the beautiful spectacle of the gentle maiden sitting flame-crowned in the sun-irradiated atmosphere, and an almost comical expression of marvellous admiration dwelt upon the features of the fascinated man.

I was charmed on looking outward to behold the scene presented now in the heavens. Foam-like cloudlets were sailing on high over a field of tender, far-receding azure, while in mid-air appeared a flock of the swift-winged bird-heralds of the near approaching summer, wheeling with rapturous delight in the illimitable realms of space. I watched the flights of the birds of summer with delighted eye for some few minutes, and then I reverted my gaze upon my fair companion, when I observed her to be communing with herself in a dreamy undetermined manner.

"Do you like India?" inquired the old lady, abruptly, raising her eyes to look full on my brother, after having for a long while spoken with herself upon many strictly private matters with distinctly audible accents.

"Well," answered Edward, in an un-

certain tone, "I did think a great deal of the island of Ceylon, where my house is, you know. It has always seemed a paradise in my eyes; but somehow, on now looking at it in remembrance, it seems to have some great want which I cannot yet understand."

"You want our religion there: that is what is wanted," suggested the Christian old lady, with emphasis.

"No doubt," assented the good-natured magnate of Ceylon, with a glance of reverential and almost appealing admiration upon the delicately beautiful daughter of the minister.

Emily observed the emotion wrought by her high power, and was pleasurably disturbed by it, as was evidenced by her action of bending her gaze towards the ground and veiling her eyes with their rose-petal lids, while a sweet blush, and quiet, faint smile, rested upon her compassionate features.

Poor Edward! he had agreed with the proposition that the one thing needed to make perfect his tropical island home was an ennobling faith; and when he had so testified, he had fixed his eyes devotionally upon the graceful, sun-lit maiden, evidently regarding her, in his paganized mind, as a living pre-

sentment of the required expression of worship.

"Come, Frank!" cried the rector, with inspiriting voice, "let us be off now about our business." Then he sprang to his feet with ready spirit, to sacrifice his invaluable time to the remedying of my interests.

I certainly had much cause for loving this true Christian gentleman; and I rejoice to say my love for him grew with our acquaint ance.

"The Lord be with you!" exclaimed the old lady, piously; and the good minister responded,—"Amen."

My brother volunteered to accompany me to the lawyer's office, and, Mr. Ellice consenting to his offer, we all stood up ready to go on our journey in mutual good fellowship.

I strongly surmised that Edward's sudden determination of active partisanship in my favour was all owing to the strong impression which had been wrought upon his mind by the marvellous charm of the minister's daughter; and while I was ungenerous enough to grudge him his touch of love's ecstasy, I was bound to confess to myself that no other than a mere oaf, beneath contempt, could have gazed for the best part of an hour on the face of the

divine Emily and yet have remained the same man as before.

When we were leaving the house, Edward—who, by this time, had been bereft of a certain original breezy self-importance—humbly expressed a wish that he should be allowed the inestimable privilege of considering himself a friend of the two ladies present; whereupon Miss Magnet, evidently desirous of making amends for her rudeness to this genial-hearted fellow, bade him welcome to call again whenever he liked; and then Emily followed up the hospitable courtesy with a bewitching glance and a gracious smile.

"We are then agreed," said the minister to the united council, just before separating, "to reject any overtures of compromise coming from the opposite side." Yet the good man, in speaking thus conclusively, betrayed by a certain intonation of his voice that he himself deplored the voted policy of irreconciliation.

"Compromise!" echoed the old lady, with an emphasis upon the word betraying her utter abhorrence of it.

Mr. Ellice plainly was much annoyed at the scornful reception given to his negative proposal, and he muttered some words, unheard by any ears than my own, to the effect

that it was matter of but small wonder to him that woman had been especially selected by the Tempter to accomplish his wicked design of setting all animated nature fiercely by the ears.

Gentle Emily did not speak on the subject; but, all the same, she expressed by her flashing eyes and compressed lips that, when it came to a question of compromise, the tide of her feelings was in accord with the rule of her sex.

CHAPTER IV.

"THE voice of woman," remarked the rector, sorrowfully, to my brother and me, when we were in the street, "is ever fatal to peace."

"Do you mean woman in general?" inquired Edward, astounded at the sweeping denunciation.

"Oh, yes; all and sundries," answered the unfavouring critic of the female side of humanity. He was, however, careful, I remarked, to glance about him, to make sure that no member of the denounced sex walked in his immediate vicinity while he was making his caustic declaration.

"Yet woman, equally with man, may attain heaven," said Edward, with tone of voice as though he were dubious upon the subject.

"No doubt," replied the minister—almost unwilling to own as much, as it seemed. "But with regard to the immortal state, is not it a noteworthy fact that in any account given to us of a heavenly conclave there never

occurs a particular mention of woman being of the members?"

"Come, minister, that is hot," cried Edward, good-humouredly. "You ought, above all men, to cry up the women, for your own are worth cracking up sky-high."

"Oh, I have no ill-will to the women," returned the rector, smiling, with an inflection of voice which suggested that the subject of conversation was not meant to be treated quite seriously.

But the simple-minded gentleman was not speaking altogether in jest, thought I; for while it was certain he considered his gracious daughter as in every sense fitted to occupy an honoured place in the next state, he must have found it impossible to imagine that state as a truly blissful one if it should include Emily's mother in the list of its active members.

Mr. Horneblende, principal of the eminent firm of Horneblende, Micah & Company, solicitors, was the legal authority to whose care Mr. Ellice had elected to entrust my case. We were fortunate in finding our man at liberty to see us on our business when we arrived at his offices. The legal gentleman made some remonstrance at being consulted without previous notice; and indeed Mr.

Ellice was to blame for our breach of business etiquette, for he had been quite aware of the rule referred to, but was so anxious to get my case quickly put in hand that he ventured to take the present hasty step.

I was amused to note a few articles in Mr. Horneblende's private chamber, which, though of a kind of furniture entirely unexpected in a lawyer's office, were yet so accordant with the owner's cast of character, that I felt almost uneasy to imagine the room deprived of them. One of these articles was a large, choice specimen of sponge coral, covered by a glass shade, and looking positively cruel in its hard, corrugated severity. Another article was a brick, inscribed with the hieroglyphic characters of ancient Egypt, and recording, I dare say, some legal business affair of the time of the Ptolemies.

My brother, glancing at these articles, appreciated them with that boastful, self-inflating spirit which the world is so largely imbued with, estimating everything by comparison with some other thing of the kind borne in remembrance, and inviting the chief interest upon the object of comparison.

"I have seen," said Edward, with depreciative accents, alluding to the coral, "as much of that stuff lying kicking about as would have

served to build a house. And," continued he, now indicating the stylus-marked clay tablet, "when I say I have been in Egypt, I cannot be expected to think much of a single figure-marked brick."

Poor Edward! He was fated now to be sorely discomfited by reason of his thoughtless display of self-importance, for Mr. Horneblende, overhearing him, at once ceased conversing with the rector, and addressed himself to the irreverent critic.

"Your words are conceived in haste, my dear friend," said Mr. Horneblende, with grating voice. "Surely it would be ill fitting to build a house with the *Euplectella speciosa.* And why, I would inquire, should the potter's shard now before you fail in its own significance because your eyes once have rested upon the storied giant-stones of the Nile banks?"

"I suppose I have spoken too fast," returned Edward, with imperturbable good humour. "Shakespeare, you know, says, 'Familiarity breeds contempt,' and that is about the touch of it in my case."

Mr. Horneblende was a tall, wiry-looking man, with a general air of preciseness about him, and had, I believe, the most scrupulously clean appearance of any man I had ever met.

He had evidently convinced himself that he possessed great power of influence over his fellows, and now he tried to exercise his presumed authority on my jovial brother by staring upon him in silence for some time after he had spoken. But the only effect he produced upon his present subject was the undesirable one of an unreasoning laugh.

"Our friend here," said Mr. Ellice to the lawyer, referring to my brother with the amiable desire of diverting the situation, "has his home in the land of the descendants of Japheth."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Horneblende, staring at Edward with revived interest. "Then he, doubtless, can be of inestimable service to me in a certain labour I am at present engaged upon, treating of the possibility of our overthrowing the institution of caste amongst the Eastern races."

My brother shook his head with a quiet smile when he learned of the labour which he was expected to facilitate, and then remarked, confidently, that the institution of caste was in force with the English people in quite as Draconian a form as it was with their Hindoo brethren of the East.

"It is very certain," concluded Edward,

with a sapient apprehension, "Heaven knows of this thing, and the people don't yet object to it. So, in such case, it may be best to let it alone. I can promise you that the Hindoos will not tolerate any interference with their old social custom."

"I am content to have, in any case, the approbation alone of my own conscience," said the egotistical man of law.

Now this man was evidently himself a very incarnation of caste, for his present business had come down to him through a considerably long line of ancestry, and his son was being made fit to receive it in due course. And again, his personal attributes were all suited in accordance to professional use and wont, his dress being sable of hue, albeit that the sun rays were then hot upon the earth, and Nature everywhere was clothed in gay livery. His face was denuded of its natural protection for the lower part, while trim little patches of whiskers were maintained for the upper part. And he had strongly exhibited his inbred narrow social views on Mr. Ellice making mention of my luckless passion for the fair young actress, when he had taken me to task, gravely bidding me remember my bounden duties as a gentleman in my sweethearting, as

in any other concern of life. And furthermore, when, in answer to his animadversion, I declared my loved one to be fair and virtuous, and of honourable parentage, he had said she was, in his opinion, unfit to be my wife, because she was an actress; or, to render his objection in another way, because she was not of my pretentious caste.

Mr. Ellice, seeing the antagonism of sympathies existing between the stiffly prejudiced lawyer and my very tolerant brother, interposed his word, bringing about a diversion of interest, and we then entered again upon the discussion of my pressing business. The worthy rector, with a courteous deference, asked Mr. Horneblende to select Mr. Spinner as his advocate in our case; and the lawyer, after reminding the reverend gentleman that the choice of an advocate should always be left entirely to the discretion of the acting solicitor, consented to waive his privilege in this particular case.

"Mr. Spinner is remarkably clever, you know," said the minister, and thanking Mr. Horneblende for his friendly concession. "And then, also, he is much attached to your client here."

Alas! that friendship was now changed to hatred within the breast of the man who was desired for my advocate.

"Of Mr. Spinner's professional acquirements I have but little knowledge," returned the lawyer, with voice and manner alike painfully at variance with the glad sunlight pouring then through the windows, making glorious the old bare room with unwonted gold; and, after a reflective pause, the stiff scion of the law proceeded to remark that report had reached his ears that the habits of the young barrister in question were somewhat irregular.

I could not remain silent while the absent man, who had been selected as champion of my fair fame, was being reviled, and I spoke up, saying that, to my judgment, the irregularity complained of in his habits was that of an Arab, who, from reason of inborn proclivity, is moved to continual restlessness. "He is animated," I concluded, "by a spirit of chivalrous honour and generosity, which the conventional world would doubtless consider altogether reprehensible."

Mr. Ellice smiled approval of my defence of the erratic-natured Spinner; while the lawyer looked sourer than ever, and presently remarked that, although eccentricity often accompanied genius, yet, in his opinion, it was not to be commended, but rather discouraged.

Mr. Ellice now prudently hastened our

business. Right glad was I when at length we arose to take our leave, as I had begun to feel it a difficult task to explain to Mr. Horneblende the matter of my visit, and I was further discomposed by the instinctive action of my brother, who, anxious to get away into the fresh bright air, every now and then had been walking towards the door, in the manner almost of a child seeking to get free from restraint.

Mr. Horneblende, while wishing us good-bye, kept his eyes fixed on Edward, and upon shaking hands with that impatient member of our company gave him an invitation to dinner, bidding him, at the same time, name a day which would be suitable for himself. Edward shuddered visibly on receiving the unwelcome invitation, and tried to excuse himself from it; but, on finding that no excuse was available in the matter, he compromised with his aversion in that pitiful course which humanity in general is so prone to adopt in any agreed conclusion that is at once unavoidable and unpalatable, namely, by postponing the fulfilment to the remotest date possible under the circumstances.

"Bother Mr. Horneblende!" said Edward, petulantly, while the door was scarcely closed

behind us. All the way downstairs he kept on grumbling to himself.

"I can tell Mr. Dryasdust," he said to Mr. Ellice, with a sagacious nod of his head, on our emergence into the street, "that if caste should ever be abolished from amongst the Indian people, then the English had better look to their sovereignty."

Our lawyer's offices were situated in a little court leading out of Lothbury, and we passed by the Bank on our road to reach the Strand, out of which thoroughfare the way branched leading to Mr. Spinner's chambers, where we purposed next to call.

A lively brilliance was now in the atmosphere, causing the long squat temple of Mammon to shine in amber hue, and appear for the time a thing of beauty, its graceful Tivoli capitals showing in most attractive guise, all vividly defined as they were in a bold chiaroscuro. The royal light was doing great things on that day with the cumbrous piles of masonry around and about the place in whose centre stands the effigy of England's favourite military hero. The ponderous Corinthian-designed Exchange was now pleasing to behold from the adventitious attraction lent by the magic sun-rays, the tall massive columns of the portico and the stone alle-

gory in the tympanum showing out from the background with quite a startling relief. High in the air the towering gables, dormers, and clustered chimney-stacks of the adjacent house-masses forming Cornhill showed in irregular and clear-cut outlines dark against "heaven's blue pacific," and through their intervals were launched concentrated beams of golden light, which, falling athwart the giant purple shadow, added glory, life, and interest to the *mise en scène.*

I was interested then to observe that most of the wayfarers, instead of partaking of the cheerful spirit of nature, as might have been expected, seemed deeply absorbed, as though the sun-glare had excited by its hue only a keen remembrance of gold in their minds, and so had caused them to grow sad with unhopeful avarice. I felt moved to pity to see such unnatural moodiness amongst my fellows, and the thought struck painfully across my mind that surely man's life in a great city is too often a thing for the angels to weep over. These gloom-bearing ones of my regard, thought I, had only to lift their eyes towards the house-tops to receive a striking lesson in the all-important question how to use the life that comes and goes in a brief span of time, and is full of real shadows, as well as those

created by man himself; for there was then to be seen far on high a circling flock of doves all busy with their own daily duty, yet gloriously in love with the charming weather, and exemplarily setting themselves to enjoy life while its enjoyment was possible.

A terrible maelstrom of humanity surged and roared in the place around the statue, and a block of the streets having occurred by the thronging vehicles, our little party stood still waiting for a few minutes at the corner of Princes Street, when Mr. Ellice pointed out a pile of cannon-balls lying on the roof of Mammon's fane, and which he explained were placed there for purpose of defence in case of an insurrection.

It is, I suppose, only right to employ deadly means for the suppression of an *émeute* of the mob, yet to make ornament, as in this instance, out of things which are meant to kill, causes Mammon to appear a very offensive monster indeed.

When we passed by the Mansion House a continuous stream of persons was passing up the one stair and down the other, and my brother, with strong social instincts, would have proceeded inside the hall of justice, only that Mr. Ellice firmly exercised his authority to

prevent him from indulging his idle inclination. I felt grateful again to think how blessed I was in the friendship of this worthy minister.

The locality appeared full of strong pulsating life, and bright colour, while a Babel of human tongues together with the snorting of many poor beasts of burden and the sharp clatter of a myriad of wheels, surged in the square, open place to a positive fury of sound, and was repeated in a duller degree up the branching avenues, like the terrible din occurring at the crater of a volcano, and the comparatively moderate tumult attending the various lava-streams as they go crashing and hissing through forest and river.

My brother was positively delighted with the animation and deafening commotion going on about him, and declared that he felt as some troop-horse once accustomed to the din of strife, and who, after a long sojourn in the fields of peace, is suddenly brought back into the midst of a scene of confusion and discord.

Mr. Ellice, with his usual charitableness, congratulated Edward at having found so much pleasure from the circumstances occurring in his promenade, and the good gentleman declared he himself greatly enjoyed the stir and bustle of the City thoroughfares, though his

chief delight was in the tranquillity and gentleness of the open country, where the most violent sounds to be heard were the creaking of boughs and the rustling of leaves compelled by the breath of Boreas, and the most lively exhibition of motion was in the passage of clouds, or the wave-like undulations of a wind-blown field of bearded corn.

We proceeded by Cheapside, and, as we passed Bow Church, Mr. Ellice, pointing out the balcony high up in front, informed us that it was built at the instance of the Company of Mercers, which company, he said, claims the curious privilege of using that balcony as a minstrel gallery on any occasion of an honourable personage making a triumphal progress through the old thoroughfare of the city.

I felt much interested by the simple communication of my good friend; and when I at length awoke to the simplicity of my interest, I remembered with pleasure that the human spirit, while continuing to experience an enjoyable concern in trivial things, is surely in a healthy state, just as the body must be accounted healthy while it experiences pleasure from the common acts of daily routine. But my interest in the present subject of Mr. Ellice's amiable gossip was as nothing to be compared to that

exhibited by my brother in the same direction, for he stared up at the described balcony with such a stupid wonder that I thought he would have been given but little increase of amazement if suddenly the yawning loft had become fittingly tenanted.

When we had reached St. Paul's Churchyard our cicerone met a friend, and stopped for a little while to speak with him, when my brother took occasion to confide to me his deep admiration for the peerless Emily, and in the same breath declared his resolution to lay instant siege to her affections. "She would just fit Ceylon," concluded the love-struck wanderer. It however altogether puzzled my ingenuity to discover why the qualifications of the fair girl in question were to be considered as especially fitting to Ceylon.

When our dear friend rejoined us, he generously troubled himself to point out to us where once stood, in St. Paul's Churchyard, the ancient church of St. Gregory by St. Paul's; and although the matter of the information now given us was of no very great importance, yet we were both very much affected by the manner in which it was given.

We of course enjoyed a long look at Wren's grand design, and were fortunate in having a

sunny atmosphere for our ennobling prospect. Mr. Ellice was a faithful admirer of the majestic basilica of old London, and never failed to refresh his eyes with a view of this fine building whenever an opportunity presented itself. Now he bade us linger awhile at the top of Ludgate Hill, and feast our eyes upon the charming architectural picture presented by the pyramidal western front of the world-admired fane.

The rich sunlight was at this time beating full on the choice front, making the coupled columns, all bedight as they were with a glorious hue, appear tall beyond their actual altitude, while the chiselled story surmounting the chaste entablature was rendered in the living sun-rays absurdly burdened in its dull representation of beams. The exquisite dome rose now against a tender blue sky, and its golden cross, seen in contrast with the ether, looked an object of beauty worthy enough to crown the chief edifice of the Reformation. This stately pile, thought I, while now observing it, obtains an advantage in being surrounded by the featureless, secular houses of the yard, for contrast is thus afforded, which liberally enhances the imposing effect of the cathedral.

Mr. Ellice gazed long in silence, and his eyes

bore that earnest, almost sad expression, which often appears upon the face of a thoughtful, reverent man.

When at length he was recalled to mind that his present errand would not admit of his tarrying longer here, he sighed and gently nodded his head, and then turning towards my brother and me, with calm, hushed voice said,—"Ah, my young friends, he used his gifts right nobly who conceived St. Paul's?"

Edward, carried away by the buoyancy of his feelings, proposed that we should make the ascent of the cathedral; but Mr. Ellice vetoed this proposal, declaring that we had no time to spare, and then, with genial banter, went on to say that he could scarcely think the upper gallery of the dome was sufficiently strong to bear the weight which Edward purposed putting upon it in the shape of his own body. Edward proved quite equal in wit to his banterer, rejoining that he indeed did not object to the receiving of his quietus in company with his honoured friend, as in such case there might be an element added in his favour by his coming up to St. Peter at the gates in good company.

"Hush, hush!" ejaculated Mr. Ellice, solemnly, holding up his hand in mild reproof. But notwithstanding his air and word

of rebuke, it was evident he was not displeased with the compliment given him in so grim a manner.

We now pursued our way in greater haste than had hitherto been observed. Mr. Ellice, with sudden alertness, stated that he was anxious to accomplish a variety of business all on that day, so as to allow him to return to the country in the evening; and then he went on to declare that he was not making his present visit to Mr. Spinner of his own will, but only to fulfil his promise to Mrs. Ellice; for, explained he, it was quite contrary to etiquette for a client to visit his advocate immediately after having had his first interview with his solicitor.

The chambers of our professional champion were situated off the Strand, and overlooked the river, commanding a remarkably fine view. We were lucky in finding our man at home; and we were immediately ushered into his presence.

A strong light was flooding in at the window when we entered the sanctum, and as the presiding genius stood in front of the opening with his face turned towards us, he appeared in deep shadow, resembling almost a figure of bronze. I noticed that his attention was instantly attracted by my brother's portliness,

and, on being introduced, stared at him with an amused curiosity; and that Edward, perceiving this disposition, stared in return with interest.

"Our Indian friend speaks volumes," remarked Mr. Ellice, pleasantly, "I should say literally, for the climate."

The rector, in his present remark, had been animated evidently with the desire of affording Spinner an opportunity of passing some jocular comment on the subject, and so to bring about at once terms of familiarity; but unfortunately Edward was at this time in a sensitive frame of mind, and resented the freedom exercised towards him.

"I am, no doubt, a very great man in the matter of weight," said he, with hard voice, while his frank features looked dark under an ominous frown. "Now would it not be well for me to make a show of myself—say for three days—and then have done with it?"

Spinner said not a word, but in silence walked to the windows and looked outward; while the mild minister hastened to try and allay the rising wrath of my brother, tendering him an ample apology for the unwitting offence, and the good man presently quite succeeded in his benevolent purpose.

I felt sorry because of this disturbing incident; but I could not blame my brother for his resentment, and, for that matter, neither could I blame Mr. Ellice for his offence.

Spinner, with a proper politeness, appeared to take no notice of the disagreeable passage occurring between his visitors; but, as soon as peace had been restored, he turned round, making inquiry after the welfare of the minister's family.

Mr. Ellice, being of a peculiarly sensitive nature, was much disturbed by his little dissension with my brother, and now answered Spinner's inquiry in a hesitating manner, quite contrary to his usual air of easy cheerfulness, at first saying his ladies were quite well, and then, with sudden remembrance, stating that Mrs. Ellice was slightly indisposed by cold.

Spinner, although one of the most reckless of men, yet was possessed of remarkable tact—qualities which, I think, are found united only in such men as have left their individual impress upon the world's history. Now, with a subtle art, he addressed himself to clear away the reserve from the mind of the rector, and to soothe down my brother's acerbity of temper, and presently succeeded in putting his subjects at their ease.

It excited wonder within me to note the effect which Spinner, by his peculiar art, wrought upon my brother, for though Edward had flamed up in anger on the slight provocation he had received from Mr. Ellice, he took now, at the hands of Spinner, with actual enjoyment, a succession of raillery the mere tithe of which far exceeded in weight the entire passage of his hot resentment. "Women are especially partial to fat men," concluded Spinner, to Edward's secret delight; and then the speaker, with a playful smile, taking the fat man by the shoulders, pushed him away from the window into an easy chair near the door, remarking it was unfair of him to choose a position by the window, as he was thereby monopolizing the daylight.

Edward, in his revived good humour, cried out that he had the authority of Washington Irving for declaring that conspirators and malcontents never are fat men; and that Shakespeare implies good qualities of heart to be attendant upon corpulence of body, in making his Julius Cæsar say,—"Let me have men about me that are fat."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Ellice, in capital spirits. "Hear, hear!" Whereupon arose a merry chorus of laughter, in which Spinner's

ringing tenor vied for precedence with my brother's resonant bass.

"I say, friends," presently shouted Edward, with a merry twinkle in his eye. "The old proverb advises business first, and pleasure afterwards; bnt we have just reversed the process."

"Dear me," said Mr. Ellice, becoming instantly serious, "I had almost forgotten our business." Then, with a formal manner, addressing himself to Spinner, he rapidly sketched the incidents in connexion with my case, and also stated what he had arranged with Mr. Horneblende with regard to it.

"O tempora, O mores!" uttered Spinner, cynically, when Mr. Ellice, in after-thought, went on to describe the visit paid me by the fair one who was the innocent cause of the bitter war.

"It must be acknowledged," said the minister, with a deprecatory gesture, "the times are sadly out of joint!"

"And I must tell you," remarked Spinner, with a dry, short laugh, "I fear the spirit of disorder has played diversions upon you even, minister, for your present visit is dreadfully irregular."

"I should be very unhappy," said the

rector, appealingly, "if you, sir, decline our championship."

"But I willingly accept your commission," responded the young advocate, almost with eagerness, I thought.

"Jacta est alea," pronounced Mr. Ellice, solemnly, in the Latin vernacular. "Væ victis!"

As yet Spinner had not spoken a word to me, and now he addressed me with cold, mocking accents, inquiring if my uncle had made any Borgian move towards me of late.

I perceived, by the discourteous manner of address used towards me by my former friend, that he had not lost his animus in the matter of his secret charge against me; and in my first feeling of annoyance I was about to retort upon him, when happily the minister all unconsciously interposed his word, and stayed my impending taunt.

"I fear," said he, with a reflective nod, "we have a very unscrupulous set to cope with in the uncle and his clientage."

"That is certain," said Spinner, decisively.

When now I came with my friends to Spinner, I was not in the least disposed to beg my restoration to his favour. I certainly loved and greatly admired this man, and I

could find an excuse for him in his sudden enmity against me; but to secure the recovery of his friendship at an expense of my self-respect was indeed quite alien to my thoughts. I looked up to him with a mysterious kind of worship, and I valued his good opinion as I valued life itself.

By every evidence, he had loved me in return with so strong a love that, despite that he thought me false to him in the most cherished regard of his whole being, he could not expel me from his heart; and so, with a fierce sense of helpless restraint, he had decided that one of us should perish.

On that memorable night when he had put his seal, as it were, upon some hasty words of mine, thus binding us in a deadly engagement,—on learning at the railway terminus that my honour was threatened, he had said to me, "I claim the duty of maintaining your fair reputation." Then I had tacitly admitted the justice of his demand; and, although under the force of conflicting feeling I had wavered since in my opinion, I was here, after all, in agreement with the original terms.

"Is it not monstrous," said the good clergyman, "that the uncle, in the evening of his life, should conceive an intemperate passion

for a mere girl? It is deplorable enough that our young friend should have been befooled by the sway of his unreasoning feelings; but for an old man to have so yielded is surely monstrous."

"Not so," answered Spinner, with emphasis; "indeed, I think that that display of strong feeling in the hitherto ascetic old man affords the only sufficient proof of his being human, like the rest of his kind, and still natural in his sympathies. Man, by law of nature, remains entitled to the right to love so long as he is capable of the passion."

The young advocate was now evidently in a caustic mood; for while he must have been aware that he was trenching upon hallowed ground, where the clergyman would not dare to dispute with him, he proceeded to establish his argument, by citing evidence of Heaven's countenance of the old man's love, as afforded by the recorded lives of the patriarchs.

Mr. Ellice listened in courteous silence, with his head bowed down, in the hope, no doubt, that his unscrupulous opponent in argument would not long avail himself of the means for his assistance which he had resorted to; but, as it became evident that the irreverent one was disposed to take full advantage of his present

helping means, the minister started up, making his usual protesting gesture, and also a motion in the direction of my brother and me, which clearly was meant to convey the intelligence that he considered it was wrong to expose us to the risk attendant on a familiar treatment of things of a sacred nature.

My brother had been listening impatiently to the discussion of our two friends, and now he rose from his chair, and, walking over to the window, stood looking outward, murmuring some words expressive of his desire to take part in the happy stir of the open air, rather than listen inactively to a learned argument.

Spinner looked pleasantly at him, and presently said he considered his new friend a true philosopher, in preferring idly to roam in the bright, fresh, open air, to sitting in a close garret, listening to a subtle disputation. "My good sir," concluded the advocate, in his usual airy mood, at once playfully mocking and intensely earnest, "look out carefully, and note the striking panorama of common life. Every sign will surely serve to convince you that those beings are truly the happiest who seek the least to know. And pray believe me when I say to you that, while I am willing to

make you free of all I have to give, nothing will be found of equal value to the quip you now receive."

"You're right," answered Edward, bluntly, evidently not quite understanding the drift of Spinner's remark. "Now come and have a look out, and just see what you are all losing."

Thereupon we moved to the window and looked out, when a splendid scene met our eyes.

We beheld the ambient air pierced from time to time with flashing bars of light, like mighty brazen spears flung from the hands of gods, from out occasional rifts in the dense clouds which sailed across the face of the sun, while the long-stretching river beneath sparkled here in the bright light as a nebula of coruscant stars, and there in the beam-shorn light with intermittent iris tints as the opaline flashes of an aurora. Amidst the translucent brilliance glided a fleet of various craft, each one appearing then black of hull as the darkest shades of night. All nature was animated in an exuberance of simple joy, and things proceeding from the heavens discoursed exquisite harmonies with the things of the earth, and there was in the grand exhi-

bition a wondrous likeness to a majestic concert directed by some omnipotent genius.

I understood now what the gifted advocate had meant when, on a memorable occasion, he had objected to any selection of things visible to serve as a type of the divine presence. And also I recalled to mind that in the far-receding days of the God-favoured Moses, the bitterest complaint of the mighty lawgiver was, that man would not be contented with a voice, but demanded a similitude.

"This scene, let me tell you," cried Edward, nodding his head and winking one eye, "is worth a dollar to see."

"This dear man!" exclaimed Spinner, mirthfully, smiting Edward upon his broad back, "is as charmingly simple as a child." Then turning to me he added, with an inflection of voice sounding cruelly ironic to my discriminating ear,—"Can he really be your brother?"

Anger rose in my heart at this taunt, and I gazed steadily upon him, not caring to trust myself to speak, but with my face all aflame with the ruddy signal of resentment. Perceiving that his dart of ill-will had struck its mark, he laughed a low, short laugh of

triumph, and proceeded to give his attention again to my brother.

Edward's spirits rose high under the gay badinage of his new friend, and presently he declared his wish for us all to dine together at his hotel. "I shall take no refusal," cried the would-be host, bringing his fist, with generous impulse, forcibly down upon a table.

"My dear boy!" said the rector, pleasantly; "my wife would never forgive me if I were to accept your invitation. You young fellows will enjoy yourselves much better without me."

"Let your venture be for another day," advised I, feeling assured of the futility of proceeding with it now.

"I cannot stop half-way in my attempt," responded my brother with a nod, and an inquiring look at Spinner.

"I shall be most happy to accept," returned Spinner, unhesitatingly.

"Then," said Edward, with gratified and assured voice, "having got you as a prize, I am sure of one other."

"Nothing is ever certain," remarked Spinner, with apparent indifference, walking over to his desk, humming to himself a sprightly air.

It was now incumbent on me to give an answer to my brother, and never was I placed

in a more difficult dilemma; for whereas, on the one hand, I dreaded meeting Spinner under circumstances likely to bring about an increase of rancour between us, on the other hand it went painfully against my heart to anticipate the depression of my brother's sanguine mind which would certainly ensue on my refusal to be his guest. I remembered that happiness is a flower of human feeling very easily crushed; and Edward just then expressing a hilarious demand for me at once to give him my consenting answer, I threw prudence aside, and made a sign at once confirming my brother's simple joy, and binding myself to a meeting from which I expected would result only bitterness for me.

Mr. Ellice, with a courteous apology to my brother and me, took Spinner aside for a short time to impart to him some private communication from Mrs. Ellice.

Thereupon Edward and I proceeded into the street, and were shortly rejoined by our reverend friend. It being incumbent upon my brother to go on at once to his hotel to give instructions concerning the dinner, I agreed to accompany him. Then the minister kindly offering to take charge of the key of my portmanteau at Eaton Place, in order to send a suit

of clothes on to me at my brother's hotel, I was rendered at liberty for the day.

We parted at Charing Cross, when Edward and I proceeded direct to his hotel, which was situated in the immediate neighbourhood.

After all business was arranged, we re-entered the street, bent on nothing in particular, but with the desire to while away the few hours remaining before dinner as pleasantly as we could. My brother was profuse in his praises of our two recent companions, and I could not but think he exceeded fair warrant in his encomiums on the two men whose acquaintance he had made since the morning. My secret reprehension was considerably increased when he proceeded to hymn his adulation in homage of the minister's daughter.

Edward was by no means gifted with the power of poetic expression; and when he essayed to vaunt the several charms of his new idol, the result was not, I opine, such as deserved to be remembered. "I should dearly like to say what I think of that girl," concluded he, evidently aware of his own deficiency; "but, there! the power is not in me."

I deemed it my duty to warn him to be circumspect in remarking upon his passionate

admiration for the fair Emily to his new friend Spinner, and I slightly explained the reasons for such discretion. Edward heard this cautionary intelligence with an open-mouthed amaze and visible discomposure. I forced myself to essay the benevolent duty of trying to find comfort for him in his sudden distress, and now reminded him that I had already told him that Spinner himself was as yet unsuccessful in his suit; whereupon I had the satisfaction to behold the simple fellow regain his wonted composure with an additional flavour of sanguine hope.

"Strange," said he, in tranquil reflection, smiling at his own failure of due reckoning, "strange it is that I had never till now given a thought of danger to my new, great hope in the way of a rival."

He was a man easily made happy, and I ministered to his good humour with such expressions of hope as are in frequent use in the world, having appearance of much deep meaning, but actually meaning almost nothing at all.

"She may see more to love in you, Edward, than she can see in Spinner," said I to my leviathan brother, in reference to the daintiest woman alive. Strange to say, the big man

heartened directly; while I, to confess the sorry truth, laughed in my sleeve in my instant appreciation of a fitting though unintentional point of humour in my remark

I desired to spend the afternoon somewhere in the country; but Edward refused to go anywhere out of the busy traffic, declaring that, as he had been for many years living in the midst of nature, no change could be so thoroughly enjoyable to him as the stir and roar of a crowded city. We moved about the streets for two hours at least; but we suffered no exhaustion of strength from our idle journeying, for Edward did not choose to tire himself with the exercise of his legs, and prevailed upon me to adopt with him the course of riding on an omnibus to different parts of the city, and back to Charing Cross.

The day was one of a most enjoyable nature, the air blowing in from the north-west, strong and dry, exhilarating the souls of humanity like sparkling wine. Masses of shining clouds, like golden fleece, moved in a hurrying direction high in the empyrean, and frequently veiling the sun, caused a curious lively effect of glancing lights to appear upon the earth. The old weather-stained buildings of the great city, in the flashing sunbeams, seemed all alive,

giving sly winks and furtive signs the one to the other; while the church and tower vanes far atop were swaying to and fro in a fussy manner suggestive of a sudden lively vigilance, and a determination to thoroughly fulfil the purpose of their being. The streets were thronged with men and women of divers condition and appearance, together with the beasts which are ministering companions to the human race. All the virtues and all the vices walked to and fro, or rode in coaches, here in company. A republic of social rank reigned in the jostling human swarm of the highways. The houses abutting on these highways, remembered I, once afforded shelter to certain men who were wont to expect and to receive from their humbler brethren the homage of a straight way for their passage. But alas for the pretentions of arrogant man! "tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis." Now I saw, in company with my brother, the beggar jostle shoulders with the merchant prince, and we were thus taught the lesson that men are much quicker to change than their habitations.

My social-natured brother was much gratified by the exhibition of throbbing life which took place everywhere on our route; yet at no time did he betray the least sympathetic ex-

citement, but maintained throughout a resolute composure. The clamour and turmoil from the multitudinous swarm of mingled humanity, with their four-footed satellites in the various thoroughfares, even when surging to a positive Walpurgis, failed to thrill the tough nerves of my brother.

A peal of resonant bells smote upon the normally sound-oppressed air from some church tower, and the manifold din and outcry became then as a grand, advised mockery upon the mob-shunning, natural spirit of harmony; while the capricious sun-rays, in seeming agreement with the intemperate tone of the streets, flitted about, producing curious effects of shifting light-oases in the midst of the lively stream of humanity and on the tall banks of masonry. Yet my brother, albeit observant of the astonishing natural phantasmagoria and uproarious din, exhibited no greater emotion than was suggested by the presence of a perpetual smile playing over his rubicund countenance. He smoked cigars during the entire time of his vehicular journeyings to and from the city, and spake but very little—taking his pleasure entirely within himself.

I had desired to speak with him, but, finding he did not respond to my advances, I accepted

his example of silence, and amused myself with my own thoughts. The charm of novelty was lacking, however, in my case with regard to the circumstances attendant upon my line of progress, so I became at length almost sick of the noisy experience; and I must confess I felt very glad when, on reaching the crest of Ludgate Hill for the third time on that single day, my reserved brother nimbly descending from his eminence cried out, with a sudden impulse, using nearly the same words once uttered by a very famous lover of a town life,—"Let us take a walk through Fleet Street."

CHAPTER V.

Our dinner was, to every appearance, a cheerful affair; but there sat at the board a skeleton perceivable to two of the three feasters. My brother at the beginning was as hungry as an owl at twilight, and, while satisfying his voracious appetite, gained in happy humour with every act of deglutition. Spinner, who had come to the banquet in a spirit of careless gaiety, grew almost absurdly frolicsome as the night proceeded. I was at the outset too much occupied with serious thought to be able to take on any other character than that of the knight of the rueful countenance, which I had been practising so long; but after the lapse of an hour, when I had swallowed a couple of glasses of excellent champagne, I was able to assume a manner as playful as that of either of my light-hearted companions. My spirits were greatly helped by a trifling circumstance happening at this time. This circumstance consisted of an absurd altercation betwixt the two waiters in attendance, and which I alone

of our company overheard. It appeared that these two servants were on unfriendly terms with each other, and the one choosing to address the other by his Christian name of "James," the man thus familiarly spoken to resented the freedom, saying with significant accent,—"Mr. Dawkins, if you please." Now, upon hearing "James" promulgating his social ultimatum, I was so tickled at the supreme ridiculousness of the waiters' enmity occurring in juxtaposition with the strangely suspended, deadly quarrel betwixt Spinner and myself, that I could not refrain from loud laughter.

When I gave way to my extraordinary fit of cachinnation, my two fellow-diners looked at me in concerned amazement, and after a little while Spinner remarked to my brother that he thought I surely had swallowed a spider in my drink.

"He must have done so," cried my brother, in agreement with his friend's satirical speculation. Presently Edward saw reason in my laughing to laugh himself, and then Spinner laughed at Edward. The merriment continued for at least five minutes ere it sobered down. I had been gloomily assuring myself that hatred and uncharitableness were the abiding portion of man, and that the heavens

must be on the eve of their prophesied fall, when the voice of a fellow-creature, saying indignantly,—"Mr. Dawkins, if you please," had sounded in my ears, and straightway my dull reflection became positively ridiculous, like a thing of solemnity which is treated at the hands of a mimer.

It certainly was very remarkable that we were able to keep our spirits in a constant state of reckless hilarity, for Spinner and I were secretly so deeply at enmity with each other that, so far as the night had gone, we had not directly exchanged a single word; nevertheless we had both evinced high glee, and together had bantered our simple-hearted host, making him laugh again until he grew hoarse from the excessive strain.

Spinner had always at command a happy turn of words to convey his pungent, philosophic humour. The pretty phrases, while having the appearance of harmlessness, too often were found to sting in a very cruel manner. An illustration of his consummate skill in the art of verbal offence was afforded when my brother, in the generous fulness of his heart, cried out that he thanked Heaven for his present visit to England, for, as he declared, he had often of late, in India, felt so

miserable in being exposed to the craft and dissimulation inherent in the character of the natives, that his present taste of free, honest companionship was as valuable in its way to him as a sojourn in the ocean is to a sickened salmon. Spinner thereupon congratulated the true-hearted fellow, saying that craft and dissimulation were doubtless the most loathsome and damnable failings in the terrible gamut of human depravity.

"You know," he concluded, settling himself in an indolent attitude, and following the example of his host in lighting a cigar, "it is written, when the original serpent-dragon tempted man from his state of goodness, the offended great Master proclaimed by His act that treacherous guile should be known as the most hateful of all sin, for He doomed the glozen-tongued serpent to creep for ever ignominiously on his belly, and condemned him to abide without friendship."

The metaphorical dart of my quondam friend was aimed at me, and I was much hurt by it. I believed myself undeservedly assailed, and, despite the balm-like ichor which flowed in my wound from a clean conscience, I experienced much keen suffering. In the impulse of my resentment, it was in my mind

to retaliate upon the man who had afflicted me with his verbal missile, gaining his mark in a manner, to speak by illustration, like one who uses a boomerang, which strikes where least expected. With considerate thought, however, I controlled my feelings, and swallowed my resentment back in my throat. I remembered that my plain duty enjoined upon me to make some little sacrifice of personal inclination, in order to afford my dear brother as much peace of mind as it was within my power to contribute. Edward was firmly of opinion that Spinner and I were on excellent mutual terms, and it afforded a striking proof of my brother's want of apprehension, that he should have passed several hours in close communion with us, without having suspected our reciprocated unfriendliness.

Edward was a remarkably pleasant man when in good humour; but, like the rest of his jolly brethren in the wide world, he was not sufficiently tender in his mental fibre ever to be deeply compassionate. He was that description of man who is exactly fitted for the active business of every-day life, being unsusceptible of much delicate feeling, and incapable of either a strong, lasting dislike or a deep-rooted affection.

The carousal went on unabated, and Edward, with feelings made supremely happy by cause of eating and drinking, and further by cause of the attentions which had been lavished upon him, now formally proposed a toast in honour of the ladies.

"Come, sir, that won't do!" cried Spinner with rallying voice. "You must toast us some choice fair Ceylonese Bayadeer, who, like the famed Clytemnestra in her devoted night-watches on the towers of Argos, may at this very moment be wafting her gentle sighs across the cruel main, deeply anxious for the return of her adventurous lord." My brother laughed to hear himself thus addressed, and a slight shade of anxiety swept across his flushed countenance.

"Let us toast a fair English girl," said he hesitatingly; "and I must ask you, Mr. Spinner, to lead that matter yourself."

"Nay," returned Spinner, gaily, "the duty is a pleasing one, and I concede the honourable privilege to you, good Mr. Amor."

"Well, well, be it so!" cried Edward, looking, I thought, almost defiantly at me, while his face became suffused with swarthy crimson as he proceeded to fulfil the duty which had been, in a manner, thrust upon him. "Shall I toast the fairest woman I know in the world?"

"Aye, aye, that will be well done," shouted Spinner, with ready hand filling up his glass.

"Then," cried Edward, rising to his feet, and carrying his glass on high—but so unsteadily that half its contents was precipitated down his upraised arm—"gentlemen, our toast will be Miss Ellice."

Spinner had risen with the gallant host, and I had done likewise. I paused with my glass half-way raised to my lips, and looked straight at the young barrister, expecting to behold him struck with dismay; but, to my surprise, though unable perfectly to conceal his emotion, he mastered it sufficiently to assume a manner of temperate calmness. The smile of curiosity which had at first been upon his face, gave place to one of a heavy, thoughtful kind. While he raised his glass to his lips, his eyes gleamed out at me with a baleful expression. I felt, at the moment, afraid to look at him, as my imagination saw in the darkly brooding figure, hand to lip, a fitting presentment of the dream-god, Oneiros, bearing his asphodel, and making the suggestive sign of mysterious silence.

"Miss Emily Ellice!" I repeated absently, honouring the toast. I felt fearful that this affair would cause my brother, with myself, to

be regarded with dislike by the suspicious young advocate.

"I consider," said Edward, with ungenerous severity, "that you were strictly bound by rule to repeat the words of my toast exactly." I felt this unkind correction very keenly, as I was conscious of having devoted myself the whole day to the endeavour to please the man who now smote at me, I believe, in the spirit of selfishness.

"I have taken no unseemly liberty," I protested impatiently, "but have spoken merely unconsciously, according to use and wont."

"What does all this mean?" cried Spinner, looking sternly at my brother.

"It only means," returned Edward, with a candour certainly very pronounced, "that we are all sixes and sevens. The cause is an old one—a woman. Look'ee here, Mr. Spinner," he proceeded, with an abruptly changed tone of confidence, "I don't mind telling you that I like you better than any man I have ever met; yet when you insisted on my toast I could not help saying what was in my mind, though I feared you would be troubled over it. The fact is, old boy, I am already over head and ears in love with your own flame, and I beg

you not to quarrel with me for my presumption. You see, old fellow—"

"Say no more," interrupted Spinner, with a hasty gesture, while his old mockful smile revisited his features, and his voice once again took on its subtle expression of irony. "I am sure I shall have no animus towards you on the account you speak of. I respect your fairness. Whatever is fair, is right, say I."

"Tip us your flipper, old boy," cried my brother impulsively, stretching forth his hand to Spinner. "That's just my style." Spinner, with a short, quick laugh, brought down his small sinewy hand with a sharp clap into the broad, plump palm which was awaiting its reception. "Good!" said Edward, with a sigh of gratification, "I can now make sure of sleeping to-night as usual."

"Your brother, I presume," remarked Spinner, with seeming careless voice, "informed you of my discomfiture?"

"Discomfiture!" echoed Edward, staring at his companion with blank surprise.

"I wonder you have not been fully informed," said Spinner, with a short, forced laugh, and evidently a little astonished to learn that my brother had not been treated to a full account of his hasty proposal.

"Did she say *No*, right out straight to you?" inquired Edward, curiously. Spinner smiled, and nodded assent with affected nonchalance.

"But you will ask her again?"

"Never."

"What! knuckle under at the first disappointment?"

"Yes."

"D—n it, man! I thought you were made of stouter stuff." It was inexpressibly droll for me at this time to note the curious exchange of dominating influence which occurred between the subtle-minded barrister and his mentally rough-grained hail-fellow. Spinner had hitherto been able to play with his man as though he had been a simple child; but, on learning that his strong-minded friend was so wanting in stoutness of heart as to resign all hope in his most ambitious enterprise because he had failed in his first attempt, Edward usurped the leading position. "I should have expected better things of you, Mr. Spinner," Edward continued, with a depreciatory shake of his head. "Why, man, you are not deserving of a rare woman's love, to hold that once asking for it is enough."

"I am very glad, sir," returned Spinner, unsuccessfully striving to appear at his ease,

"very glad indeed to think I shall have in you an exemplar of the right conduct to be observed in a love-suit."

"Fiddledededee!" uttered Edward, contemptuously, helping himself to another very unnecessary glass of wine.

"There are men and men," said Spinner with chagrin when, after a long-sustained verbal encounter, he had failed, with all his cunning, even to damp his adversary's courage, and had himself, in return, been very grievously annoyed.

"Tush, man!" returned Edward, with perfect sang-froid and good humour, "that bit of truth says more for me than you."

"How so?"

"Because you are brave only with your own sex, while I am fearless both of my own and the opposite." Then he laughed a great laugh, and presently, with high glee, cried out, "Ho! ho! my friend, Mr. Spinner, I am more than quits with you there." Spinner smiled to himself on hearing Edward's taunting boast.

"'Sum quod eris, fui quod es,'" he quoted, shrugging his shoulders, intending to convey that he was then what my brother would be, and that he had once been as the boastful one was then. It was evident that he bore some

lively respect for his gross-natured antagonist. Edward now pushed the wine over to him, by way of invitation for him to help drink "t' other bottle"; but Spinner declined taking more, whereupon the host proposed that we should go to the theatre.

The proposition was favourably received by Spinner, while I was only too pleased to get an opportunity of releasing myself from my present situation.

"Hurrah!" cried Edward, jumping up from his chair, with the manner of an eager boy anticipating a relishable treat, and carolling a few staves of a ditty popular in London somewhere near a decade since, he nimbly danced his leviathan form out of the room to make ready for the forthcoming pleasure.

"Your brother is a genuine kind of man," said Spinner, when we were alone together. His emphasis on the word brother was evidently intended to convey that *I* was by no means a genuine kind of man.

"It would seem," I returned, resentfully, "that we have a striking illustration of the poet's aphorism, 'What is only a choleric word in the captain might be flat blasphemy in the soldier.'"

"I understand you," said he, with his eyes

half closed, while a bitter smile played over his features. "You would have it that your own damnable offence is only of a piece with the self-confessed softness of your brother. But the truth is, that while he has in perfect manliness felt, and openly acknowledged, a deep admiration for a certain young lady, you, while similarly moved, would not confess it, but practised the most artful deceit."

"You are yourself, at this moment, practising the most miserable deceit possible," I cried, fretting with the terrible rage of despair. I plainly saw that this man had closed his mind obstinately against any good reflection on the subject of the alleged offence which he had laid to my charge. "You are of your own will deceiving yourself."

"Oh, indeed!" ejaculated he, sarcastically, drawing up the window-blind, as if to contemplate the night. He devoted his attention apparently to a survey of the darkened heavens; but his mind remained with the subject of his recent words, for, after staring outward silently for a short time, he turned again to me, with his face marked with lines of sternness, and said cruelly,—"Your brother's act is one alone of honest and perfectly excusable homage; yours, that of treacherous theft."

I was so outrageously incensed at the gross injustice of his accusation impugning my honour, that I gave him the lie direct.

"I confess I admire Miss Ellice," I cried, impulsively. "I, however, emphatically deny that I have ever behaved treacherously towards you in the matter."

He stared at me like some wild animal astonished by a deliberate blow; but, as he perceived that I did not cower under his menacing look, he turned once more to the window, muttering with fierce tremulous accents that the time and place unfortunately admitted of idle words only. After a short pause, he turned again to me and said,—"I shall not speak with you further at present upon our cause of quarrel. It should not, I think, be degraded by mutual recrimination, but treated with the golden respect of silence until its hour of decision arrives."

"When will that hour be?" I demanded.

"When your honour is fully vindicated," strangely answered the advocate of my cause.

"Why accept the office of my champion, since you hold me unworthy of your respect?"

"Because I consider myself, for certain reasons, the most fitting advocate for your cause. You have Horneblende for your soli-

citor?" he asked, after a long-seeming pause. I indifferently nodded assent. "And your uncle has the daring unscrupulous Hebrew?" he further inquired, with his deep-browed eyes resting full on me, as he sat astride on a chair with his arms crossed upon its back. "Well, I am concerned to tell you that, in the matter of solicitors in your case, pro and con, you are in your usual luck."

"Mr. Horneblende, then, is not a good man in your opinion?" said I.

"Mercy on us, now!" he cried, hastily quitting his seat, and holding up his hands in pretence of being shocked. "Who shall be thought good, when the virtue of Horneblende—the most ponderous exemplar of eminent respectabilities extant—is made the subject of inquiry!"

"I am sorry he is not to your liking," I remarked, with the intention of annoying my sneering companion.

"At all events," he answered, with a sardonic laugh, "you will most certainly find in the highly respectable Mr. Horneblende a lawyer after your own heart."

My brother now entered the room, gleefully impatient for us to start at once, and in the gay exuberance of his feelings proceeded to

pose himself in an extravagant attitude. Spinner, becoming infected with the light humour of the moment, stared with an ostentatious affectation of criticism upon the happy fellow, and exclaimed, in allusion to certain preparations made by Edward,—"It is surprising what soap and water, with the assistance of a rosebud, can do for a man's appearance!"

"Behold me now *en fête!*" cried the merry one, making a formal bow, with his broad palms extended over his great chest.

"I salute you in compelled admiration," said Spinner, returning a pleasantly mockful obeisance; whereupon Edward laughed so heartily and so loudly that the glasses on the table sounded a jingling chorus. "The best Amphitryon is he with whom we dine, says the proverb," lightly exclaimed Spinner; "and I really quite agree with that saw in the present case."

Edward, like his congeners of happy-go-lucky nature, was not easily moved by any considerate spirit to respect the susceptibilities of his neighbours, and now, with disregard to my tenderest feelings, he stated his desire to be conveyed to the theatre whereat, to borrow his own phrase, a sight could be had of my bewitching nautch-girl.

Spinner, though a second Lucian in his constant affectation of ridicule at the sentimentalities and unreasoning emotions of life, was yet apt to be affected by the most simple impulses in his own soul, and was always willing, strangely enough, to extend to the moral prejudices of the individual the respect which he would deny to the amiable irrationalities of the community. "We had better go to one where we shall all feel comfortable," said he, with strange delicate consideration.

My brother, unable to comprehend the motives of delicacy prompting Spinner's suggestion, looked askance at me, as though he thought some shameful mystery existed in which I was deeply concerned.

"I am willing to go to any playhouse that will suit you two fellows," he said, carelessly. "I, however, should prefer an entertainment that is, you know, a thing of gas, paint, music, and pretty, young dancing-girls."

"In vino veritas!" cried Spinner, highly delighted with his host's blunt contempt of dissimulation. Edward—upon Spinner's mention of a particular theatre at which an entertainment of an entirely sensuous kind was to be found—executing a variety of frolicsome antics, led the way into the street. We then got

into a vehicle, and shortly were feasting our enamoured eyes and ears with that sense-intoxicating foolery which owes its origin to the ribald city of the Seine.

Edward was affected almost to hysteria by the idiotic masque which he witnessed, while Spinner sat looking with laughter in his heart, evoked, no doubt, in part by the performance, but chiefly, I believe, because his fat friend was yielding himself up heart and soul to the influence of the revelling stage. I have never seen a man exhibit such *abandon* in an act of pleasure as my brother did. His attention, indeed, was so completely occupied with the source of his merriment that he gradually arrived at a stage of mind in which he was, to all appearance, unconscious of the presence of any other audience than what was comprised in his own person. In this glamoured mental condition his laughter was so unmannerly in its loudness, that the house, from being at first amused, conceiving that their unconscious zany was really lacking in proper respect, hooted and hissed the offender with such hateful vehemence as to check the fountain of laughter in him for the rest of the evening.

"Let us go," at length said Spinner, to my great relief, and also, I am certain, to the joy

of my brother, who, poor fellow, was thoroughly tired of sitting bound in restraint, and staying in his chair only to mar something of his hydra-headed oppressors' triumph. While we were retiring with some scoffing sounds pursuing us, I remarked to Edward that the populace were ever ungenerous in their pleasure-rioting; when he damned the people, forgetful of the fact that, as the greater includes the less, his anathema was bound to descend upon his own head.

I felt sorely dismayed to hear Spinner propose that we should go and gaze upon the girl whom he had appropriately styled a sorceress, and addition was given my sudden distress by the greedy haste with which my brother signified his acquiescence in the vulgar proposition.

"I 'll go as far as the theatre, and then go on home," I said to my companions.

"Just as you like about that," returned Spinner, indifferently.

As we threaded our slow way along the footpath, overcrowded now with madly hasty swarms of repleted votaries of pleasure, disgorged from the various temples of Momus, clustered together in the venerable Strand, my brother asked me to say, to quote his own expression, what was "my game." I could

easily divine, from Edward's sagacious shake of his head, and leer of his eyes, that he could imagine no higher motive for my intention than one which might be supposed as animating a wine-heated satyr to slip away from his meet-fellows in the glade, and seek the sequestered shades of the boscage.

I passed over his remark in silence, considering that any attempt on my part to admonish him would have been as futile in effect as that legendary attempt with the tub of Danaides.

"I believe that you are an out-and-out Don Juan, old boy," he sneered, nudging me in the side.

"What is that you say, Edward?" asked Spinner, overhearing him, and speaking with pretended concern. "Why, sir, I am certain your brother is actuated by motives worthy the great Zimmerman himself. Your suspicions with regard to his pure-mindedness but redound to your own discredit."

"What is that Mr. Spinner says?" I inquired of my brother, pretending not to have heard.

"Ask the man himself," he returned, abruptly.

"I shall not trouble him," I said, with affected nonchalance. "I dare say it was not of much consequence."

"There are none so deaf as those who won't

hear," quoted Spinner, pursuing his tortuous way amidst the pleasure-surfeited crowd of humanity, rendered now almost frantic in their sudden anxiety to get home and into bed.

"Pity it is that any of your words should be wasted," cried I, sarcastically.

A second or two afterwards I heard my enemy mutter to himself some words of very wrathful import, and I was able to gather that he had mistaken my remark for an allusion to his great failure at the Rectory.

With my thoughts absorbed in regretful consideration that my repartee should have been taken as charged with a meaning the most spiteful to conceive, I pressed on like one in a dream. Suddenly I was startled into resentful vigilance on receiving a violent concussion upon my chest, causing me to reel backward with such force that, had it not been that I was in the midst of a dense crowd, I should certainly have measured my length on the pavement. As it was, I received a stunning blow, and then staggering against some of my neighbours, I was cursed and struck at as though I had been one guilty of a crime. I waxed exceedingly wrath under the ungenerous treatment to which I was subjected, and, in a spirit of mere animal anger, thirsting to glut my rage upon

some one particular member of my offenders, I seized hold of the one who had flung himself against me at the first. To my loathing surprise I recognized my victim to be the man Stoat, my uncle's villainous factotum.

I fear I was unpardonably cruel at this moment, and allowed my evil passions to have a devilish play, for while I retained this hateful creature in my grasp, though I knew he could not be held responsible for being thrown headlong at me, I took my opportunity to pay him out for old scores between us, and, using my firmly closed right hand for my unscrupulous revenge, I beat the poisonous little monster until he could scarcely draw breath.

"You will suffer for this, I promise you," he gasped, when he rose from the gutter, into which I had finally pitched him.

At this moment, while I stood fiercely regarding the half-killed wretch, who should march in between us but the bully Captain, escorting on his arm his beautiful niece, the loadstar of my destiny.

"What's the row?" said the Captain, looking in surprise alternately at Stoat and me.

"I have beaten your man," said I, scornfully; "that is all."

I was all aglow with satisfaction at having

enjoyed that sweetest of all revenge, revenge by the aggrieved one's own hand.

"Why have you beaten him?" inquired the Captain, in apparent hesitation whether to let go his fair charge, and chance a muscular blow upon me, or to preserve his calmness and avoid a brawling scene.

The Captain was a very powerful man, and also, I believe, a brutal one; so he was, no doubt, sorely tempted to try and strike the pride out of me; but he restrained himself.

I raised my hat to the young lady, but refrained from addressing any words to her, as I felt only too well aware that silence was indeed a golden rule for me to follow in this case.

My brother had been standing by, passively looking on, while I pummelled the villainous Stoat; and now, as the truculent Captain and his fair charge disappeared amongst the crowd, he bustled up to me, saying,—

"What the devil is the matter now?"

"Oh, never mind," I answered curtly, feeling decidedly averse to take all the world into my most intimate confidence.

I now overheard the recipient of my forcible attentions proclaiming aloud, at a short distance off, that he knew I was, to use his own

words, "as drunk as I could stand," and that I was a disgrace to my family.

My indignation at the scurrilous account of me by my vile enemy became intensified upon hearing another voice, which I recognized as the Captain's, strike in with all the horrid savageness of a bear's growl, declaring the late scene to be the result of heavy drinking. I could not but own to myself that appearances were decidedly against me.

While I was standing on the kerb, obstinately waiting to see if my enemies would take any further action against me, a voice, which I recognized as Spinner's, whispered in my ear,—

"Look ahead, and you will see something which will open your eyes."

Obeying the monition, I was wrung in my heart to behold my uncle's carriage roll past with the Captain and his niece peeping out of the window; while the wretch whom I had drubbed sat beside the coachman upon the box, gibbering in spitefulness at me, for all the world like an exasperated baboon.

"Ha, you!" cried the dwarf, extending his hairy fist at me. "Mind, there will come a day of reckoning between us."

I paid but slight heed to this menacing human devil, bestowing my chief attention

upon the fair face looking out of the carriage window, and appearing now like some fascinating young beauty depicted by the marvel-working hand of Greuze. My heart was stung again and again as the sight flashed in my eyes of the lovely creature I worshipped being carried home in my triumphant uncle's brougham.

"I have seen your flame," said my brother, close at my side. "Spinner says she went away in the old man's carriage, and—"

"Yes, yes, I know," returned I, interrupting him in his cold-blooded comments on what was to me a matter intimately concerning the life of my life.

Dreading a continuance of the rough, unkind badinage, which I felt certain was already in the minds of Edward and Spinner, I dashed into the living stream of the pavement, and fought my way clear of it, when I was enabled to go on apace. I soon reached my temporary residence.

CHAPTER VI.

ALL of Miss Magnet's household were in bed when I arrived. The experience of the preceding night weighed still upon my spirits, for I perceived that the circumstances which had provoked the old lady's walking trance were existing now almost without change. I felt miserably wearied, yet highly wakeful, and I began to fear that my life was being harassed to a speedy conclusion. I saw to the fastening of my room door, and went to bed. An hour passed away with swift wings, and still no good rest was mine. The ghosts of my past day would not be exorcised, but in their clear field of possession mocked me in a perfectly pitiless manner, causing my heart severer anguish than that it experienced at the time of the actual events. I occupied a room on the ground floor, intended, I understand, as a library, but used as a spare bedroom. Knowing as I did, when lying awake in the terrible darkness, that I was the only living soul on the ground floor of the house, my mind was denied

the self-assuring privilege of attributing certain eerie noises which broke upon my ear from time to time to the unconscious action of a neighbour wooer of the drowsy god. It is not, I take it, slightly valued by any inviter of sleep to be able to satisfactorily account to himself for the odd squeaks and sighs, together with uncanny rustlings and sharp clicks, which may be heard by his wakeful ear at dead of night. It is, perhaps, a merciful thing that the common sounds I speak of should enchain the wakeful attention, or else the sleep-forsaken one might be quickly devoured in brain by the inordinate action of excessive, deep-revolving thought. I suppose it was greatly owing to my fearful expectation of a visitor that I had my mind on the rack, at one moment fancying I detected sounds of light footsteps descending the stairs, and at another imagining that the handle of my room door was being turned round. It was intolerable for me thus to lie helpless in the gloom, with whimsical fears gnawing one after another at my heart, like Prometheus stretched on the rest-forbidding rock, tormented by the vultures of his daring desires; but at length there came relief to me in the curious form of an unmistakably real cause of alarm.

The back drawing-room was immediately over my head, and my vigilant attention became wholly engrossed with some mysterious sounds as from stealthy footsteps proceeding thence. I listened intently, and, after a while of apprehensive uncertainty, I grew convinced that a person was moving about the apartment above me. I now, with forewarned perception, divined that my dear, unfortunate old friend was again in a perambulatory trance, and I sat up in my couch the better to ensure my preparedness for a visit I expected would probably be made soon at my own room door. The suspense was terrible as I sat in the solemn darkness, with my whole faculties concentrated for the time in the act of waiting for the climax, and minute after minute crept by with lagging pace without bringing me the fulfilment of my dreadful expectation.

At length my liberation came; but in a manner totally out of my calculations, for while the alarming footsteps still were sounding overhead, there impinged upon my distressed ears a shriek so piercing in its shrilly loudness as to cause me a shock equivalent in its sudden pang to the sharp agony of a knife wound.

I was out of bed in an instant, and, gaining

the door by a series of stumbling movements, I speedily transferred myself into the passage, when I heard the voice of a man saying, in husky tone,—"What's up?" And then I heard another answer,—"The dead, I believe." I was confused, and altogether distraught, by reason of my late vigils, and therefore I remained irresolute for a second or two. I stared amazed to see two dusky forms glide almost noiselessly across the hall, and out at the front door, which had been ajar. I recovered presence of mind just in time to recognize one of the figures to be, in his squat, thickset outline, the burglar whom I had encountered recently in the struggle on the outside pavement. I had been lost in astonishment just long enough to allow the prowlers of the night to make good their escape unchallenged out of the house, and when on recovery of my consciousness I ran in pursuit they were already running at a rapid pace along the deserted pavement. Being clad then in so slight a costume as to be almost *in puris naturalibus*, I ventured to play the part of Nemesis for such time only as was occupied in a pursuing race of somewhere near a hundred yards, but at the same time taking care to loudly give the view halloo, that the chase

might be taken up by some one presumably on the look-out for a hunt of the kind.

When I was making my way back I noticed several human heads peering out at me from bedroom windows; and while I felt ashamed to be seen, I was indeed surprised to note how very few out of the number of persons who must have been startled into wakefulness by my cries had troubled themselves to arise and ascertain what was the matter.

Miss Magnet's serving-man came up to the hall door from below as soon as I returned into the house; and though he displayed the utmost consternation, and with commendable promptitude set off in pursuit of the housebreakers when I had informed him of the direction of their flight, I was much disturbed to think that he had appeared so soon in his complete dress. I had always strongly disliked this man, suspecting him to be cunning and unscrupulous, and I was disposed to believe that he knew more of the first burglary committed on his mistress's house than he chose to reveal. This second attempt was certainly of an extraordinary nature, and I could only account for it by the supposition that the robbers must surely have learned by experience that honest persons are marvellously simple in their thoughts and

habits; and in regard to the small circle comprising Miss Magnet's household, having recently suffered from a thievish intrusion, it would straightway, in all likelihood, trust that another attempt of the kind would never be made while yet the first one was the topic of the neighbourhood, and, consequently, would rest but lightly on guard.

As soon as I had put on my lighter garments I ventured forth, and, bounding upstairs to the drawing-room, learned from the trembling maids, standing purposelessly on the landing, nestling together like sheep in a storm, that their mistress had been discovered, by her maid, lying in a swoon across the balcony of the staircase leading up to the drawing-rooms. They also informed me that, from the fact of her being in her nightdress, and provided with a candle, which was found smashed upon the stone, it was surmised that she had been walking in her sleep, and, attracted by the strange sounds in the drawing-room, had opened the door and walked in, when, being rudely awakened by the terrified rush of the knavish intruder, she had, with a scream of wild alarm, fallen down in the swoon.

I now proceeded in great concern to the second floor, where the private rooms of my

stricken old friend were, and ascertained from the maid in attendance that the old lady was to appearance just alive, and no more. Considering it advisable to lose no time in procuring the services of a medical practitioner, I hurried downstairs on my urgent errand; and when I had reached the hall, I found myself confronted by a couple of police officers, one of whom, I grieve to relate, was an old acquaintance, he having met me on my senselessly provoked introduction to a police-station. This man, on recognizing me, interposed his body between me and the door, and would not permit me to pass out.

I informed my detainers succinctly as to the nature of my errand, and then getting the reply that my errand would be carried out by one of them, I, scorning to resign my undertaking of mercy at half way to another man's care, dashed out at the front door, pursued by one of the officers, and succeeded in reaching the house of a well-known physician in the neighbourhood, and performing an act of loud summons with knocker and bell ere my panting chaser could put his hand upon me. "I think you will rue this little performance," he uttered, almost breathless. "I think otherwise," I returned, feeling assured in my re-

mark; and shortly I had the satisfaction of carrying my purpose to completion, returning to my starting-point in company with the physician.

I was regarded in the eyes of the officers with suspicion at the moment of their arrival in the house. My antecedents which they knew of were quite unfavourable, and now I had been met running in precipitate haste from the scene of trouble, advancing, when challenged, the plea that I was bent upon an errand of mercy. "Let me see," said the policeman of my former acquaintance, when I had related the facts which had come under my observation, "do you think you would know your men if you saw them again?"

I did not like the tone of voice in which the policeman put his question, as it impressed me with the opinion that he was suspicious of my integrity, so I disdained to answer him at all.

"Ain't you the witness that saw the other robbery?" inquired the second officer, eyeing me mistrustfully. "He is the very man," said his colleague, with uncivil emphasis. These authoritative inquisitors were careful to keep within the limit of their warrant, and, while saying much that was insulting by inference,

took care to avoid saying a word that would justify my letting free the fire of my wrath.

The old lady recovered consciousness under the treatment of the skilful physician, and grew so far composed as to be able to lie quietly in bed. When the medical gentleman came downstairs to return home, he was ill pleased to see policemen busying themselves so near his patient, and peremptorily ordered them out of the house. Then instructing me to maintain a rule of silence equal to that of the Trappists, he quietly effected his own departure.

It seemed to me as if misfortune, moving in my company like some terrible plague, afflicted all with whom I came in contact. I had always entertained the utmost contempt for suicide, yet of late there had been a lurking idea often in my mind, of a self-deceiving character, to the effect that I should, indeed, welcome any opportunity—such as that of being taken in a small ship to sea during a storm—whereby there would probably be given an honourable and yet speedy end to my sorrowful career.

CHAPTER VII.

I CONTINUED to reside at Miss Magnet's house, while the dear old lady lay hovering betwixt life and death. Day after day crept into the all-absorbing past, and not until a full week had elapsed did the physician feel warranted in expressing his hope of his patient's recovery. Mrs. Ellice had come to her aunt's bedside on the first morning of the old lady's illness, and had remained in the house ever since. She had, to my infinite satisfaction, lent me no more of her company than was afforded by our occasional meetings in the passage and on the stairs, when she would notice me with a kind of bow, so exceedingly reserved, as to cause me to wish rather to get the cut direct. Mr. Ellice called now and then in the forenoon, and Emily sometimes came with him, when she would remain in the sick-room until such time as her father would call for her to return home with him.

The rector was much distressed at the late events, and I could plainly perceive he was

impressed with the pardonable though uncharitable opinion, that it surely was high time for him to banish me for good and all out of the midst of my peaceful friends.

"No one has been arrested for the robbery as yet," he said to his wife, in my hearing, on the eighth day after the housebreaking.

"Dear me!" sneered the lady; "I am indeed surprised to hear that. Why, I should have thought that scarcely any trouble would have been experienced in detecting the guilty persons."

"Why should you have thought so?" mildly inquired the minister.

"Because," answered Mrs. Ellice, scowling, as it seemed, at me, "the police people say they feel sure the robbers were well acquainted with the house."

I naturally felt indignant to hear this spiteful woman advance a statement which evidently was meant to give me pain. Yet, while I thus conceived offence, I felt that my bitter enemy believed not what now she took in her mind to repeat, nor desired that I should think she believed it. I turned to her, and expressed my surprise that the police authorities should be so indiscreet as to make a remark of the kind to any non-official person,

and especially to a lady, who presumably was not willing to be treated to their speculative hints. Mrs. Ellice forbore to vex me further; but, according to her wont, she refused me the small satisfaction of the last word, answering me that although she had no wish to encourage the police to reveal their ideas, yet she should not be content to remain quite uninformed.

I knew that ill luck, so called, was only an outcome of indiscretion and lack of patient application; and, while admitting such to be the fact, I could not lay blame on my friends for heartily wishing to have my company exchanged for my place. I was undoubtedly far from a good subject; yet there was that much to advance in my favour that, throughout all the days of my folly, I never failed to improve myself in my medical knowledge during six hours, at an average, out of every twenty-four. I also had attended with fair regularity at my college.

On the tenth day of poor Miss Magnet's illness, she sent word for me to come up to her in her dressing-room, and immediately after I had finished breakfast I obeyed her summons.

I had already seen my dear friend twice during her illness; but on each occasion she

had not been able to speak to me at any length; and, indeed, her weakness was so extreme, that I feared she would never recover strength sufficient to keep her alive for another year. When now, in obedience to her command, I entered her presence, I immediately noticed she was as bright and vivacious of expression as she had ever been in the days of her unbroken health; and I divined there was some strongly animating cause at work to produce this startling exhibition. Mrs. Ellice was present, and carried upon her browbeating countenance an added look of strong discontent. She stared at me in hateful wonder when I entered, and, without returning my salute, flounced out of the room.

"Sit down, you foolish boy!" were the first words addressed to me by my staunch old friend; "sit down, and tell me why you are of so much trouble to all your friends." I obeyed the mandate of my benevolent tyrant, so far as to seat myself, and then waited to hear her state a little more definitely what was desired of me.

"Well, sir?" she cried after a pause, when her keen eyes had, so to say, looked me through; and as now she uttered her prompting exclamation, she struck the floor vehemently

with the staff which served her as a prop. "Answer me!"

Now my present catechiser was surely, I thought, unreasonable in expecting me to answer off-hand a question which, to have done it justice, would have required a world of careful reflection, and, for the utterance thereof, have necessitated a study on my part of that terse style of eloquence which was peculiar to the old-world Delphic temple.

"You know," said I, with admirable but ill-advised explanation, "it is my unfavoured love."

"Tell me how far you have gone on with it," said the fine old lady, with her piercing eyes fixed upon me. As she resolutely clasped her stick with both hands, I noticed that her limbs trembled violently. I was deeply pained to see her afflicted with such extreme debility.

"I have nothing to tell beyond what is already widely known," I remarked, simply.

"I am willing to do something for you, young man," she said, after a slight pause, with changed tone of voice. "I still believe your nature to be sound at bottom, and I am as willing as ever to be your friend, if you will only agree to try and conform to my advice."

"Madam, your kind offer is far beyond my

deserts," I answered, with a swelling heart. "Yet while I acknowledge so much, I feel it to be out of my power to avail myself of it."

My dear well-wisher must have divined my thoughts, for she went on abruptly to remind me, in her own quaintly expressive manner, that life was always truly unhappy to be made a thing of blind self-seeking and indulgence; which bad manner of conducting life was being exemplified, she declared, in my own case. I felt humiliated to hear this relic of the distant past admonish me with a far clearer wisdom than had ever been mine to possess, for I had, in my presumptuous, youthful vanity, believed that beauty, strength, and god-like intelligence were qualities only possessed by the juniors of mankind, and I now perceived that the last and chief of these virtues was not the monopoly I had deemed it to be.

The shrewd aged lady seemed at this time to be animated with a rare wisdom, which enabled her to read my inward thoughts as if they had been written out upon my forehead; and while at other times her powers of intelligence had flickered with intensity, as the flame of oil, alternately at rest and then moved by external influence, she now exhibited a resolute capacity of intellect, constant and

penetrating as a beacon at sea. She had paused again to peer into my face, to read off, as it were, upon my features the effect produced by her words; and as the small, weird, grey countenance advanced forward upon my fascinated sight, I quailed with a strange fear, and sat stock-still, waiting in rapt attention to learn at further length my moral presentment, judged according to the canons of a bygone generation. I was awed to be thus attentively gazed at by eyes which for nearly a century of time had been conveying to the directing mind impressions of life's various moods and guises to be at length understood by the analogies existing in certain outward manifestations with certain occult disposing influences. While I was thus spell-bound, a feeble but startling voice smote upon my ear, bidding me say if I would consent now and for ever to submit to the indicated yoke of self-denying duty.

I answered almost imploringly, like some poor infatuated wretch driven to a conscientious extremity, that I acknowledged my own present blameworthiness of conduct, yet craved to be left for longer time in it; when my strange monitor proceeded to remind me that life, to ensure a proper universal approval, must be

conducted with patient industry, and in the observance of the long-established rules of duty belonging to the particular sphere in which it had pleased Heaven to call each individual.

"Now, young man," curiously remarked this mouthpiece of the revelations of well-nigh a hundred years, "I am prepared to say, from long observation, that when a man and woman wed, they not only marry each other, but the whole number of relatives of their respective families; so I would warn you to wean your affections from that chit of the theatre, and set about trying to fulfil your bounden duty; for while you continue in your present attachment to a wickedly bred, heartless, painted thing of a woman who is related to a disreputable set of nobodies, you are standing in danger of utter destruction of happiness both here and hereafter."

I felt sorely troubled in spirit at the charge now preferred against me, and, convinced that it was strictly true, albeit horribly unpalatable, I did not attempt to justify my conduct, but simply repeated that I could not help my feelings in my unreasoning devotion to the fair, gifted scion of womanhood.

"A sorry argument, that of yours," com-

mented the old lady, scornfully—"one quite unbecoming a gentleman."

"Unbecoming a gentleman!" I repeated, in astonishment.

"Aye, just that," said she, with a reflective nod. "I ween a proper gentleman is one who knows exactly what is his duty, and does it, equally whether it cost him a pang or afford him a pleasure. And I hold," she continued, with a sudden sharpness of voice, "that the man who would plead his inability to conform to rule must either be an ignoramus or a conceited simpleton."

I was proceeding to express my appreciation of the honour now given me in my good lady's testimony of interest, when the blunt old dame stopped me short, remarking, with cutting irony, that my present fine speech pricked her memory to a retrospect embracing almost every day of her life, for, averred she, of all the current lip-courtesies the one I had made use of was surely the most superficial.

"You must remember," continued the ancient wise virgin, with a pitiful smile upon her million-wrinkled countenance, "you are now speaking to me, not to a silly girl with a head like your own—wanting in common sense."

I was now deprived of all heart to make any

further attempt to ease the sharpness of my humiliation, the last fell stroke completely abasing my spirit. When, however, my free adviser, in the course of her invective, took the liberty of stigmatizing the idol of my soul as a heartless, painted thing, I thought that was certainly exceeding her privilege, and only the circumstance of her great age and physical frailty prevented me from challenging her spiteful, gratuitous expression of abuse.

It caused me to despair of conscience ever becoming king of the world when I found Miss Magnet, who was strict to a degree in her demands for equity, so far neglecting the dictates of conscience in her counsel to me as to villify the person and belongings of a young woman whom she never once had seen, and knew almost nothing of, while her censure devoted to myself, the only real offender, was of a kind having affection for its base, and intended for my ulterior benefit I sat still after my last rebuff, looking at the time-wrinkled face meeting my fascinated eyes, when presently I was pained in my heart to perceive a change steal over the venerable features. The change was, indeed, a sad one, for the intelligence which so vividly characterized the dear old face now all died out, leaving a dull expression in its stead, remind-

ing me of the change which often is seen to occur on the face of an infant while under attentive notice from an adult.

I stood up, requesting leave to retire, when the now-feeble lady raised her eyes with a vacant stare into mine, and, seeing me about to go, mumbled some petulant words in objection to my purpose. I considered it was advisable for me to depart; and while I was taking counsel with myself as to what course would be the most compassionate for me to follow at this juncture, the door of the room was pushed partly open, and in popped the unwelcome head of my standing enemy, Mrs. Ellice, asking, with laughable pretence of civility, if she might come in.

When she had seated herself, she bestowed immediate attention upon her relative, and with her natural sharpness of discrimination at once perceiving that the aged one was totally enfeebled, she turned to me, and, with more than usually grating voice, inquired if my indulgent friend had effected any arrangement with me.

"None whatever," I replied, promptly.

"Surely people nowadays, both young and old, imagine that valuable time and opportunities are of no account whatever," she exclaimed.

"It is miserable to think of—very, very, miserable."

"Shall I go now?" said I, amazed.

"Oh," returned the uncongenial one, with a short dry laugh, "you can go at once for me."

I said nothing in reply to her retort, but advanced to my kind patroness, and taking her hand, affectionately wished her good-morning; whereupon she lifted up her dear, time-wrinkled face, and eagerly staring into my eyes, invoked the care of the Most High upon me, returning my grasp with a warmth which convinced me that in this estimable lady I possessed a very friend of friends.

"Oho!" cried Mrs. Ellice, observing the affection now lavished upon me, "then it is actually settled that you, sir, will remain my aunt's *protégé* for the next two years."

"No settlement of the kind mentioned, or, for that matter, of any kind whatever, has been even discussed in the interview I have had with Miss Magnet," I returned, warmly, "and if I should be given such an offer, I should certainly refuse it; for while I feel grateful with my whole heart for the shelter I now enjoy at the hands of my honoured old friend, I am far more anxious to conclude my heavy trespass

upon her benevolence than to seek its enlargement."

I fain would have broken off relations with Mrs. Ellice, only that I should have been obliged in such alternative to suffer the cold looks of her most intimate friends, whom I loved above all other people in the world.

"What do you propose to do, then?" she asked, with mock concern, very aggravating to my lofty spirit. "You cannot, in common propriety, continue your attentions to a young woman who is already spoken of as your future aunt."

"The young lady you refer to is not yet my aunt, and I shall maintain my attentions to her in the mean time," I answered, defiantly.

"She has accepted your uncle," said my tormentor, with a malicious sneer; "therefore, you are now properly debarred in your ill-advised suit."

"I am not so sure of that as you are."

"Why, sir, you are bringing disgrace upon all your friends."

"That charge, to have weight with me, should come from the mouth of a friend," I said, disdainfully.

"It has come certainly from the pen, if not

from the mouth, of a friend," said she, with a withering glance.

"Whom do you refer to?"

"The chaperon, &c.," she answered, with a sneer of most malignant meaning,—"the chaperon of your dancing flame. Captain—or Corporal Melrose. I forget exactly his title."

"Captain Melrose," said I, laying an emphasis upon the title, with the intention of annoying my enemy, "is certainly not, I beg to inform you, one of my friends."

"He *was* then."

"I deny the assertion altogether," I returned, growing much offended. I deemed my position secure, but was speedily disturbed in my confidence, as my quick-witted opponent, first making the cynical remark that no doubt I had gained to my own future advantage by refusing to take Captain Melrose to my heart, proceeded to explain, with apparent enjoyment of my irrepressible apprehension, that the 'man Melrose,' to quote her own words distinguishing the officer in question, had lately written a letter to the rector, in which my turbulent adventure in front of the playhouse was fully described. "And also," she concluded, with the finesse of an accomplished venger, who

knows that the cruellest of all means of terror is the announcement of a catastrophe without the explanation of its nature, "he told of other shocking doings of yours."

"What are those terrible charges?"

"I have not got the full particulars of them yet," was her unsatisfactory answer.

"I am sorry, madam," said I, thoughtfully calculating the effect which I desired my words to have, "very sorry that Mr. Ellice, when indulgent enough to make mention to you of the aspersions cast upon my honour, yet refused you their explanation."

"Refused!" cried she, with sudden shrill voice. "How dare you address such a word to me!"

"You stated so yourself."

"Stated so myself!" she repeated, with dark frowning brows, and now employing a tone of offended surprise. "And pray, sir, when did I confer upon you the privilege of casting my own words impertinently back to me?"

"I assert no such privilege, madam," said I, with due respect.

The implacable lady then turned away from me with a shuddering grimace, as if from a hateful object; and, indeed, I entertained but little doubt that by this time I had become a

presentment of extreme aversion in her sight. "Mr. Frank Amor," said she, speaking now *at* me, "must have a care how he is going on, if he values his life to come." Now while I was compelled secretly to admit the urgent necessity existing for my own regeneration, I was strongly impressed with the collateral opinion that a similar necessity existed for my cautioner.

I saw myself occupying now an unpleasant position beside these two ladies, Miss Magnet being unable to yield me any further attention, while Mrs. Ellice was unwilling in such respect. I therefore made off as speedily as I could, taking my opportunity at a moment when the sharp tongue of my ill-wisher was at full clack in affectionate address to her good old aunt. While I was stealing from the room, I noticed that Mrs. Ellice watched my action from out of, to use a vulgarism, the tail of her eye, and I felt, I must confess, a sense of relief when the door stood between her and me.

I proceeded downstairs, fully expecting to find some one or two persons waiting to speak with me—probably, I supposed, a single member of the legal profession, or, mayhap, a couple of policemen. The fact was that, unfortunately for my peace of mind, almost at

every hour of the day, as it seemed, I was in request by some one member of the legal profession, or by members of the police force—always two together.

I was not quite out in my reckoning; for though neither policeman nor lawyer was in attendance, there was my brother waiting impatiently to see me. I felt glad to meet Edward, but could not help regretting that his present call would engage me away from my professional studies. I observed that his face was unusually dull; yet, albeit that I was not myself feeling particularly happy, I gave him a cordial greeting.

"You seem jolly," said he, with slightly offended voice, almost as if I had been doing him an injury.

"Are you not yourself jolly?" I inquired pleasantly. The simple fellow thereupon seized hold of his waistcoat, and, jerking it outward, plaintively invited my attention to the visible evidence he advanced to prove a rapid diminution of flesh to be taking place in his corpus, and then said, lugubriously,—

"Isn't that quite enough to damp the jollity in me? Two pounds and an ounce in three days!" he added, surveying his stricken paunch.

"To what cause do you attribute this rapid atrophy?" I inquired, with tender commiseration.

"Worry!" answered the sufferer, with a slow, expressive shake of his closely cropped bullet head.

I was seized now with a playful humour, and, unable to believe that any serious diminution of normally monstrous bulk had taken place in my easy-tempered brother, I bantered him on the subject, but failed to move him out of his despondency.

"Look'ee here, old fellow," said he, gravely. "I am certain that, if something better than words is not quickly done for my case, I shall go on growing finer and finer, until I arrive perhaps to be a mere scarecrow—like yourself."

"I feel truly sorry to see you in such low spirits, Edward," said I, banteringly. "You must not imagine, old fellow, that you will continue to fine down as you are doing now. Your dinner will make that all right."

"I have made my first attempt," said he, in the manner of a man who has dared much.

"Well?" I uttered, with secret anxiety, quite understanding what he referred to.

"It came to nothing," he succinctly explained, with chap-fallen expression. Then with a sigh he looked down at his diminishing though still enormous proportions with woebegone air, as if he fully expected that he himself would very soon come to nothing also, or, in most hopeful anticipation, to the semblance of a scarecrow. Then, perceiving that I waited for him to make his explanation, he proceeded to state that, remembering the rector's invitation, he had paid a visit to Wandle Parsonage, and while there had asked Mr. Ellice for leave to pay court to his daughter, and that the reverend gentleman had answered that he felt himself under the necessity, from certain cogent reasons, which he did not care to explain, of discouraging any new proposals for the courtship of his daughter.

"I told you who was there before you," said I, with a dull pain at my heart.

"You told me of Spinner, but you said nothing of yourself," he returned, with unfriendly accent.

"I consider your action in seeking the hand of Miss Ellice precipitate in the extreme—indeed, almost impertinently so," said I, scornfully.

Edward took my reproof in far better part

than I had expected of him, appearing rather pleased than annoyed by it. He went on to relate that he had had some conversation with Mr. Ellice concerning myself, in which they had mutually agreed that I should properly leave England immediately after the day of my trial, and that I should proceed to Ceylon and settle there.

"Have you consulted with Spinner on the subject?" I inquired.

Edward nodded assent. "I have."

"What opinion does he offer?"

"He was good enough to say that if you went abroad he should probably bear you company. Now I would ask you, old boy," continued Edward, coaxingly, "what could happen better for you than such an arrangement? Don't you see, you will have a bracing sea voyage with a capital companion, and a crack situation at the end of your journey?"

"All's fair in love or war," says the old adage. Poor Edward, in scheming to render his chosen difficult path easier by way of stratagem, was only to be blamed in common with every single soul who has ever looked upon the daughters of men and seen that they were fair.

"I fear, Edward," said I thoughtfully, "you

have, like all the rest of my friends, taken a wrong view of my conduct."

"When you come to take the right view of it yourself," said he, gravely, shaking his head, "you will certainly get a shocking fright over it—such a fright, old boy, as will either kill or cure you."

I returned him mocking thanks for his portentous caution, and affected to treat it lightly; but, nevertheless, its truth entered deeply in my spirit, and I felt it rankling within me for a long while afterwards. I could not but acknowledge that his proposal was a liberal one; and though the tropics were for the most part unconquerably hateful to my imagination, yet Ceylon had been associated in my mind, from the time of my boyhood, with the conception of an earthly paradise. I was perfectly aware that in the event of the lovely Eve becoming the wife of my uncle—how I shuddered at the thought!—I must of necessity force myself to leave the scene of what would be to me a constant source of exquisite torture; yet to yield my consent to a prudently designed plan of expatriation before I could know the resolution of my soul-felt hopes and fears was simply impossible.

"I am much obliged to you, Edward, for

your offer," said I, after serious reflection; "but the time is too premature for me to decide upon it."

"Premature be hanged!" he exclaimed, annoyed that I should not waive incontinently all scruples and favour his scheme.

"I have certain private reasons of very great importance which militate against my off-hand decision in the matter."

"Surely you must be a fool to imagine that the tempting opportunities for your welfare now offered to you will come to your hand at any time just to suit your convenience," he cried, starting from his seat. "You should keep in mind those words of the poet," he added, hazarding, unwisely as it proved, to assist his argument with some poetic truth, from the somewhat chaotic storehouse of his refined memory, "There is a flood in the affairs of men,"—pausing here for want of ready remembrance, and happily unaware of his blunder, he tried in vain to bring his text further to mind, and presently added the safe addenda of his own,—"and so forth."

"Ah, Edward," said I, amused, "it is easy to advise, but very often difficult to follow advice."

"Man alive!" cried he, turning round on me with flaming countenance, "can you think my

present advice easy, when you know it carries with it the question of the probable loss to me of some two hundred pounds, at least?"

"Money! money!"

"Oh, poverty kills love, if you come to that," said Edward, impatiently.

"Then," said I, thinking to give him a sting of reproach for his mercenary views, "you hope to succeed in your enterprise of love by the aid of money?"

"I believe," returned the apostle of money, with a meaning smile upon his lips, while his eyes, looking downward, were met by the prospect of his tun-like paunch, "I should be nowhere without it."

I reflected that it was only too true that I had been myself rejected by the friends of my siren because I had not enough money to qualify me in their estimation, and my uncle had succeeded in his designs by virtue alone of his superior wealth; but these striking proofs of the mighty power of mere lucre, though coming home immediately to my heart, and bearing absolutely on the question of my future happiness, did not suffice to convince me that money was supreme in the world. There was in my mind the remembrance that my dear sister had married her lover for sweet affection's sake,

while yet another lover, as rich as ever was Crœsus, was offering himself for her acceptance. And then I had another certain example of a contempt for the allurements of worldly wealth in the fine-souled Emily Ellice, who had already proved her possession of that rare quality by her refusal to become the wife of Spinner, though even that wealthy young gentleman had been favoured in his suit by both her father and her mother.

"Money," continued my brother, "is the grandest power there is in this world." He paused here on catching sight of his reflection in a large looking-glass, when he seemed to derive both comfort and strength from his scrutiny, and he proceeded to say that he would not have me think he believed that every fellow with money could get in marriage just the lady he might wish for.

"Money, I am sure," said I emphatically, "will never tempt Emily Ellice in the least."

"Rubbish!" growled Edward. "Why, man, that girl, though one, no doubt, a long way out of the common, is yet bound, like the rest, to study other considerations than those of her heart. Spinner certainly failed with her, though he brought a power of shining metal to back his cause; but who can affirm

that I have no chance of winning until I have said the word and got the answer?"

"I hold, with Turgot," said I, "it is always useful to recognize the absolutely best, even though we may not see our way to it."

"Turgot go hang!" he exclaimed. "The question is, what do you think of my offer? Spinner, you know," he concluded with unlooked-for finesse, "is very kind in offering to accompany you on your voyage, and is, I think, entitled to an immediate answer."

I smiled sadly, to think how undeservedly a man may sometimes obtain for himself the reputation of magnanimity. In this instance of my presumed friend being credited with a burning attachment for me, I was reminded, to my grim amusement, of the comparative case which is said to have occurred in some part of America, where two men having accidentally fallen into a river, a particular onlooker upon the banks was remarkable in his efforts to save one, especially, of the two unfortunates, and succeeding in his partial endeavour, to the inquiry if the rescued one was his bosom friend, answered that the man in question was not indeed his friend, but his debtor.

"Tell Mr. Spinner," said I, whimsically, "I am not yet ready to leave England."

"Well," said Edward, ungraciously, "take note, old boy, that my offer is not a standing one."

Then he went on to utter a good many hard words in criticism upon my doings, and the motives thereof; but he was able, happily, to control his tongue sufficiently to prevent it from expressing any positive insult. His sarcasm, like the darts used to vex a bull in the arena, though very annoying, did not bite deep. "If you were not my brother, old fellow," he concluded, with candid significance, "I should certainly go along with your enemies, heart and hand."

"I will not beg your goodwill," I responded, deeply hurt; when instantly there rushed in upon my mind a crowd of tender recollections. "Edward," said I, with chastened feelings, looking him earnestly in the face, "never say again what you have just said."

In no instance have I beheld a finer illustration of the truth of the noble proverb that "a soft answer turneth away wrath," for my brother's inconsiderate anger softened to the very mildest disapproval, and instead of seeking, as he had done, to wound my tenderest feelings, he endeavoured to convince me that I was acting very unfairly by him in particular.

"Do as you would be done by, old boy, if you seek to come off well at the finish," he advised, after telling me, in the very plainest old Saxon idiom, that I was veering in my present course in the straightest direction to that place which is said to lie on the other shore of Styx.

I begged him to desist in his attempt to force me to a course which my mind was quite unwilling as yet to follow; and at the same time I enjoined him to believe that he should never suffer in his own fair prospects by any ungenerous act of mine. When thus I had spoken, my truly warm-hearted brother impulsively gave me his broad palm, in token that he meant still to stand my good friend; and then telling me to excuse him to the ladies for a hasty departure, he betook himself away.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE days crept by with lagging pace until the arrival, at weary length, of that appointed for my trial, when a revulsion of feeling took place in my hitherto impatient mind, causing me to wish that anticipation in this matter had gone on for ever. I walked now as one in a dream, and performed my usual duties in a totally mechanical manner.

All my faithful friends gathered together early in the forenoon, at the house whose shelter I had obtained at a time of need; and now, while encouragement poured in upon me from every quarter, I was able to respond only by words uttered almost unconsciously. An instinctive dread possessed me of some impending doom—that the heavens were about to fall, or at least that London was about to suffer the terrible fate of old Lisbon.

While I was thus affected, the ceaseless chatter and light laughter of my good friends sounded a supreme mockery in my ears. My poor case had assumed such vast importance in

my estimation, that when I saw everything about me going on in an ordinary jog-trot manner, I was almost inclined to believe that the indifference of my countrymen had reached a pitch of hopelessness which surely indicated the impending decline of the British Empire.

My brother was one of my present supporters, and when I had met him on his coming into the house, his portliness appeared so striking to my eyes, that I was instantly convinced that he had, since the time of our previous meeting, fully recovered his mourned lost pounds of flesh.

Observing him in remarkably high spirits, I conceived the notion that his late despondency had proceeded not from any cause of disappointment, but from some slight irregularity of his liver. The great Napoleon once said, "Stomach rules the world," and my own limited experience in human physiology has taught me to believe that Napoleon in so saying most certainly expressed the truth.

Mr. Ellice, together with his son and daughter, had slept overnight at Miss Magnet's house, in order to be ready to accompany me this morning to the court. The good rector was bound to attend as one of my sureties, while Emily had been subpœnaed as a witness in my

defence, to explain, if necessary, concerning the vinaigrette found apparently in my possession.

This meeting of my well-wishers was an event, I promise you, never to be worn dim in my memory by the attrition of all the circumstances of my whole ordained future life. The levity of my dear friends, I could easily discern, was for the most part assumed in order to cheer me. I felt myself, therefore, bound to suffer in silence, and be grateful for the spirit prompting their light-heartedness. Mr. Ellice conversed with my brother in a strain of good-fellowship which convinced me that Edward's late ill-judged attempt in courtship had not alienated the benevolent minister's regard for him. In the course of the conversation they enjoyed together, the rector made some reference to Mr. Horneblende, our solicitor, whereupon Edward, shuddering visibly, as if disturbed by some extremely unpleasant remembrance, said that he had fulfilled his dinner engagement with the gentleman in question.

"I hope you enjoyed a good dinner?" said Mr. Ellice.

"Oh, the dinner passed off well enough," returned my blunt-speaking brother, "but the two hours after it were the worst I ever experienced in my life."

The time for departure having arrived, Mr. Ellice sent notice to Emily, who was with her aunt, and presently, to the surprise of us all, who should be seen coming downstairs in company with her, but the brave old mistress of the house, apparelled for out-door travelling.

My heart was filled with gratitude to see this grand old dame, stricken in years, and still suffering from her late shock, rousing herself, in the ardency of her espousal of my interests, to forget her feebleness, and risk the excitement of a scene of trouble, that an estimable countenance might thus be lent me in my critical hour of trial.

Mr. Ellice ran up the stairs to the dear old lady, and implored her to forego her present dangerous intention, promising to send her news every half-hour, provided she stayed at home; but she obstinately lent a deaf ear to his considerate words.

"For Heaven's sake, dear madam," he exclaimed, with lively concern, "do not attempt to appear at the court *in propriâ personâ*."

"For Heaven's sake I mean to do it," answered the old-fashioned dame, in the quaint phraseology of a bygone, sharp-witted, select society.

"You are not, indeed, fit to stand the excitement," continued the minister.

Miss Magnet raised her resolute old head at these words, and, while supporting herself with one trembling hand resting upon her young companion's shoulder, and the other propped upon her staff, she darted a look at her challenger as keen as that of a hawk, and, with dry voice, characteristic of strong self-will, said, "No one can judge as well as I whether I am fit or not to carry out my present purpose."

"You know your physician would forbid this rash step," continued the rector.

"I have not seen him this morning, to ask his advice on the subject; yet I have no need, I think, now to be in the least afraid for myself."

The minister being now, no doubt, convinced that opposition would annoy, but not prevent, the intractable, brave old dame in her purpose, gave way to her under protest; and shortly she was placed in her own carriage, under the tender solicitude of her fair companion.

I was amused on overhearing the obstinate but kind-hearted aged one, in a pleasant undertone, congratulating herself, in that too-commonly practised self-deceiving sophistry of

the world, which would assume that the patient may sometimes with impunity steal a march on the physician.

Mr. Ellice accompanied the ladies in the private carriage to the court, and the rest of us proceeded there by means of a hired vehicle.

Hugh Ellice, in the simplicity of his nature, was deeply affected, being all in a nervous tremor, and was apparently compelled to give vent to idle speech almost without intermission. My brother was a man rather chary of words, and disliked the company of one given to chattering; therefore he was much annoyed. He put his head repeatedly out of the coach window, and resorted to many other devices to try and obtain for himself some relief, and while he, I make no doubt, felt anxious to avoid any unpleasantness with the babbling boy who had the honour of being brother to a maiden the fairest walking in the world, he was at length impelled to yield instinct the precedence of prudence, and, turning round upon his unconscious tormentor, blurted out the words,—"I can't imagine what the devil advantage a man can hope to get for his own share, or else to give to that of his friends, by turning himself into a talking-machine."

Hugh, poor boy, was quite dismayed at the

totally unexpected satire directed against him, and was instantly deprived of all his exuberant spirits.

Edward was not content to let his victim rest with a single shock, but had at him further. "I believe a man may find something worthy of imitation in the owl, the ant, and certain other animals quoted in moral text; but I cannot think he will do any good for himself in copying the magpie."

Hugh looked extremely foolish on receiving my brother's rough reproof, and stared at his reprover with such a piteous expression that I was excited irresistibly to laughter to behold him.

I felt apprehensive of his behaviour during the forthcoming grave scene, as I remembered he was prone to giggling on certain provocation, and I believed there was now considerable likelihood that he would be found giving vent to involuntary little spasms of laughter when the most serious questions were being discussed. I therefore asked my brother to take him in hand, and keep him in check, and Edward accepting the charge I was, to a certain extent, relieved to think that the dreaded giggling, on its first outbreak, would meet with a very stern repression.

The general action which followed upon my

entrance into the court was to me so confusing that I was almost deprived of the power to discriminate clearly the sequence of the proceedings.

I was conducted at first into a room, when I was visited by my champions, and received from them some very encouraging advice. Spinner, attired now in the bizarre costume worn in honour of Themis by his satellites of England, spoke to me in a strain at once formal and kindly; while my non-professional friends addressed to me an interchanging medley of heartening exhortation.

During the few hours of my agony on that never-to-be-forgotten day, I lived at a terribly expensive rate of vitality. I verily believe there was expended within me, in the course of those awful hours, as much of the subtle essence of life as would have met the exigencies of at least a year-span of ordinary existence. I believe I should have gone hopelessly crazed but for the constant attentions of my friends, distracting me from my stupendous, awful dread. I was conscious of my inability to see and hear in my ordinarily natural manner; and my general perceptions had become so dulled, that when I was summoned to come into court, and was at the same time given the

intelligence that the prosecution had been abandoned, I experienced the shock of my anticipated ordeal without the relief which should properly have followed upon the news that the field was now my own.

I walked into court, with my heart, so to speak, in my mouth, and on taking the place assigned me, looked slowly around, when it seemed to me that the only objects about me were human eyes, all expressive of curiosity.

At my first visual encounter, I was stricken in terror; but, after a while, I gradually recovered my composure, sufficiently to discern the welcome faces of my familiar friends. Being thus inspired with fresh courage, my eyes again swept round in a general survey, and now I perceived that the list of my onlookers included Captain Melrose and his beautiful niece.

My gaze became fixed upon the attractive countenance of the unwitting author of my miseries as though I had been fascinated by a basilisk, and while I gazed, thus dangerously to my new courage, an authoritative voice sounded at the back of me, demanding silence in the court, recalling me suddenly to consciousness.

Now uprose the usher, who was about to

call out my name, when Spinner interposed to stop the commission of that indignity, affirming that, the charge being already abandoned, there was no necessity for introducing my name before the public.

I felt very grateful to him for his present act of kindly consideration, and bowed my acknowledgments; and as I glanced aside I observed my dear friend Miss Magnet sitting bolt upright in what I took for a reserved seat, and seemed waiting for an opportunity to catch the eye of my advocate. Emily Ellice was sitting by the side of her venerable relative. The place occupied by these two ladies being now visited by a stray sunbeam, the strangely contrasted figures stood out with a prominence which was indeed quite startling at first sight. The extraordinary spectacle appeared to attract the general attention, and I noted that, while the old lady was the cynosure of the eyes belonging to her own sex, the fair young maiden unwillingly monopolized the attention of the men. Spinner's gaze was presently directed, with the rest, upon the curious illumined picture pieced out by the sunlight in the middle of the sombre court; whereupon the aged figure inclined her proud head to the young advocate.

The magistrate had been occupied till now

with some papers, and seemed so absorbed in their perusal that I made sure he had failed to take cognizance of a single incident of the whole proceedings. I was, however, mistaken in my conclusion, as, shortly after Spinner had spoken, he bent over his desk, and in most equable tone desired to be informed whether he should understand that the charge was abandoned. Then up started my uncle's lawyer, Mr. Cohen, and, in accents almost of disgust, answered that such was the case.

On the announcement of the withdrawal of the prosecution, murmuring sounds arose again in the public parts of the court, and presently my ears detected some notes of sibilation proceeding almost immediately at my back. As I was somewhat suspicious of these sounds, I turned round to note the performers, when, to my amused surprise, I detected my grand supporter, Miss Magnet, with her few remaining teeth set close together, making her scant breath hiss through them in a ridiculous spasmodic manner.

The usher sprang again to his feet soon after the sibilant sounds began, and in stern voice demanded silence once more, when the offending ones instantly yielded obedience, saving only my dauntless old partisan, who played out her expressive solo to her heart's content.

There was, I take it, a certain contempt of court in the hissing act of my ardent old friend, for I observed that all the officials' eyes were now directed anxiously to the magistrate. The respected arbiter, I was glad to see, did not respond to the silent inquiry addressed to him, but made a somewhat clumsy pretence of being unconscious of the flagrant breach of the rules of the court which had taken place.

The usher was a man wanting, evidently, very sadly in that useful quality, tact; for while it was unmistakably perceived by all other persons present that the presiding official had affected his obliviousness of the old lady's glaring offence, and was desirous of remaining unprompted, the obtuse functionary, with short-sighted persistency, proceeded to invite the unwilling notice of his superior to the decided act of contempt of court which had been committed by the venerable dame.

The magistrate, in vexed tone of voice, now proclaimed that, if any one should dare to repeat the offence in question, he should order the court to be cleared.

Miss Magnet was able to comprehend that the caution was addressed chiefly to herself, and with that spirit of irreverence which belongs alike to infancy and old age, she mumbled

some words evidently of a rebellious nature.

"Why is this very old lady brought here?" demanded the magistrate at length, ill-temperedly.

"I came of my own will, sir, in my private chariot," replied the aged one, with dignified manner. Then, with total disregard of the well-meant interpositions of her confused lovely companion, she proceeded to address the court, with voice feeble in itself, and maintained only with severe effort, yet asserting a strange power over its hearers. An almost breathless silence prevailed in the court, and all persons present strained forward to catch the tremulous words that issued from the lips of the brave old lady. "When last I sat in a court of justice," she continued, lifting her head erect, and gaining more firmness of voice, "the case was one of a king trying to dishonour his good queen, and the decision went against him, to his utter confusion. Now, sir, I am watching a case in which a man of Belial tries to wreak his evil spite out upon a proper-minded youth, and again—thank God! —I have seen wickedness baffled."

The venerable dame, on the conclusion of her wondrously inspired speech, was greeted with

applause from the back benches, which unruliness was suppressed promptly by order of the magistrate. Yet, by the unexampled toleration accorded to the unauthorized remark of the old lady, proof was furnished that the court itself had in a manner countenanced her act of contempt of judicial rule.

The proceedings altogether at this moment were very irregular; as the magistrate passed over the ancient dame's offence with no more serious notice of it than was afforded by a strained frown, and a slight intermittent knocking of his knuckles upon his desk; while the counsel and lawyers were, to a man, evidently amused, if not even delighted, by this strange incident.

Order being again restored, the magistrate, assuming a very indignant aspect addressed himself to my uncle's lawyer, saying that he did not know what had been done in regard to this case now suddenly withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the court, but there had certainly been submitted to him evidence enough to warrant him in granting a summons. He paused here for a few seconds, to collect his thoughts, and then proceeded to state it was his opinion, considering that the prosecution had abandoned their case at this early stage,

and bearing in mind the statements which had been laid before him, that the charge as directed had been found a deplorable mistake.

"Well said, sir!" uttered my irrepressible old friend.

The magistrate, apprehensive, no doubt, that further leniency would bring his court presently to resemble a *conversazione*, sternly expressed the threat that he should order the foremost offender to be expelled if she spake another word.

The worthy gentleman was now excited by his multiplied vexations to a high pitch, and inquired angrily if the prosecutor was in attendance. Mr. Cohen, with dejected air, answered that the individual in question was not present in person; whereupon the fuming magistrate addressed to my uncle's deputy some remarks upon the strangely relinquished case, which were so trenchant in their genuine honesty as to cause me sorely to regret that my uncle was not present to hear them for himself.

Spinner rose as soon as the umpire had concluded his remarks, and, in tone of triumphant satisfaction, asked for the dismissal of the summons.

The magistrate answered promptly, that he should now, of course, do so.

When I received the word of release, I became suddenly faint, and should have fallen to the ground, but for a friendly arm supporting me to a seat. I lay back in a state nicely poised, as it seemed, between the chance of present recovery and that of total prostration, when the administration to me of a glassful of cold water turned the scale in favour of returning strength.

My ears greedily caught the words of Miss Magnet, saying, in answer to her young companion's anxious inquiry if I was dangerously affected, that she had no thought whatever of my succumbing to my present faintness, and then exhorting the gentle maiden to go and treat me to a sniff of that salt so much in requisition by ladies—the sal volatile. I found myself presently treated by the compassionate hand of Emily to a sniff of the pungent salt, and this second restorative administration completely revived me.

"He has now recovered, has he not?" inquired a voice near me, which I recognized with much emotion as that of the young actress.

I observed the erstwhile gentle Emily start back a step or two, with a slight frown, when I betrayed my sudden excitement.

"Here is some brandy," said the bewitching

Eve Melrose, stepping forward, and offering Emily—to her evident disagreeable surprise—a silver flask, which, no doubt, at one time had been a valued item of a certain campaigner's kit. "Will you give it him?"

"No, thank you," replied Emily, with chilling, resentful voice. "He has no need for brandy."

"It will lend him strength to go home," advised the fair siren, with her cerulean eyes fixed full upon the haughty Emily Ellice, and still proffering the spirit-charged, silvern vessel.

"We have at hand a better restorative than brandy," said the novice in worldly ways and common beliefs; "we have sal volatile."

In the nervous impulse of the moment, she extended her hand, exhibiting a tiny, jewel-encrusted phial, containing the restorative in question.

"What!" uttered the attractive daughter of Terpsichore, with a short, pitiful laugh, while her whole features expressed a wondering amusement, "you actually believe that sal volatile is superior to brandy? "Well," she added, in a quiet, reflective voice, with a touch of sadness in it, "if I could only give you my experience, you would change your opinion."

"Give it me, if you please," I gasped to the Bacchic Hebe.

She advanced to my side, and uncovered the flask, with a slight smile of triumph resting upon her proud features. Then, with her own hand, she gave me some strong waters to drink, and which I could not have resisted if my very life had depended on the effort.

"Now that will do," said my enchantress, with assured voice, when I had imbibed a small quantity of the potent fluid; and, nodding to me encouragingly, without any further word, she speedily vanished from my enamoured sight.

At this moment the magistrate impatiently ordered me to be removed from the court as speedily as possible, considerately advancing the plea that the public business must not be made to wait upon private emergency.

"You are really a lucky fellow," said Edward to me, while we walked together through the passage of the court. "Why, I believe I should welcome a fit of faintness myself, if I knew it would bring me such attention as you got."

"The first part of the late enagging episode, I thought," remarked Spinner, who was walking with us, addressing himself to my brother

rather than to me, "afforded a fine study for some artistic genius to work up an illustration of the idyll of Fonrose and Adelaide; but in the second part, where the beautiful witch appears, bearing her vaunted elixir, the whole piece was, in my opinion, sadly jeopardized by the employment of the Captain's bottle."

"The bottle was, in my opinion, quite a success in the piece," cried my brother, with coarse humour, "seeing that Frank took no idle pull at it."

I walked in silence, and gave no sign to betray that the merciless badinage of my companions was keenly wounding my sensitive spirit. The mention of the Captain's having supplied the thing which had stimulated my fainting energies jarred miserably upon my feelings, for at the moment of my acceptance of the draught I had considered only the hand which offered it.

We passed two men in the passage, who were loitering, apparently in idle humour. I instantly recognized them as my old acquaintances of the detective service, who had given me a world of trouble in my uncle's house, and now I shrewdly suspected they were bent upon some little business in their particular line. They recognized me at a glance, but exhibited

no sign of recognition beyond a somewhat prolonged stare upon me.

Spinner did not fail to note what manner of men were these two loiterers, and presently hazarded the opinion that the gallant Captain, who had so kindly devoted to me a share of his much-esteemed cognac, was, in all probability, the particular quarry whom the beagles of justice were lying in wait for.

"What matter," said I, indifferently, "if it should be as you surmise."

Spinner shrugged his shoulders.

"Have you heard anything to make you suppose the Captain is wanted?" inquired my brother.

"I have arrived at my present assumption," carelessly replied Spinner, "not so much from information received, as by an inductive process of reasoning."

"That's a rum way of getting at it," said Edward, dryly, with a laugh.

"Let me explain," continued the cynic, counting upon his fingers. "First, I see detectives, and straightway assume that some one in the vicinity stands detected of villainy, and is therefore in request. Second, I remember having seen but a minute since a number of arrant villains congregated together, and therefore reasonably

determine that the discerned knot of obvious knaves must include the particular one in immediate request. Third, I select from out the villainous group one individual than who a rascal of deeper dye never existed."

"What! Captain Melrose?" cried Edward, with a lively show of interest.

"Hush! he comes," whispered Spinner, interrupting his thoughtless friend, laying his hand upon him, and gazing back into the passage.

Sure enough, there now appeared in the distance the Captain himself, accompanied by his fascinating niece. We slackened our pace, in order to let the interesting new-comers overtake us.

The detectives, with spirit akin to that of beasts of prey—created, no doubt, by the peculiar nature of their profession—had ensconced themselves in the embrasure of a window, and stood back out of sight. This action, being quite unnecessary, was prompted, I am certain, only by their strong propensity to lurk.

Captain Melrose was naturally, I have reason to believe, of a very suspicious cast of mind. Again, the circumstances of his life had been chiefly of a nature by no means calculated to modify his inborn mistrustfulness. The man's

cautious disposition was now strikingly displayed, for, as he advanced, his watchful eye catching sight of the figures in apparent ambuscade, he shifted his position from next the window by crossing behind his charming companion, and taking the opposite side.

"The beginning of the end, I ween," remarked Spinner, noting the strategic move of the wicked Captain.

Immediately on this comment, the lynx-eyed myrmidons of the law emerged from their place of retreat, and placed themselves in front of their man.

"Brought to bay," muttered Spinner, pleased, evidently, at finding that the process of action bid fair towards the fulfilment of his prophetical utterances.

A few moments of suspense ensued, during which some animated conversation took place between the detectives and their prisoner. Then arrangements seemed to have been effected that the Captain should be accompanied by the policemen in addition to the company of his fair niece.

"Quid pro quo!" ejaculated Spinner, on beholding the new order of the Captain's advance; and he quickly warned my brother

and me to loiter no longer, but bestir ourselves to escape from our delicate position.

I ought properly to have acted on the advice of my considerate companion, and have retired, affecting not to have noticed the shame of my enemy; but I am ashamed to say that I stayed on, rooted to the spot, until I stood face to face with the wretched Captain and his trembling charge. She, poor girl, was overwhelmed with confusion, and struggling to restrain her tears.

Spinner exulted, I fear, in my present miserable encounter; yet, while I attribute ungenerous emotions to him on this memorable occasion, I feel bound to say that he had not sought the unhappy situation, but, indeed, had endeavoured to avoid it.

"See saw, Margery daw!" exclaimed the Captain, on perceiving that his arrest had been noted by me and my companions, his natural bravado standing him in as good stead as ever. I could easily divine the meaning of his oracular expression, and was not a little indignant to think than this reprobate should rank his own chances of fortune on equal terms with mine; yet I felt, indeed, very great regret that the unscrupulous fellow had been secured at last in the meshes of the law. That he was an unconscionable knave I was perfectly assured,

and I had little doubt that his present case was a matter for all honest men to rejoice over; yet, despite the scoundrel's repugnant qualities, bearing, as they had, evilly towards my own welfare, I could not but regard him with some degree of kindliness. Doubtless a large share of my indulgent regard for this terrible sinner was owing to his relationship to the idol of my soul, though the fact of the man appearing always in cheerful humour had, I believe, a considerable influence in the tolerance I intuitively accorded him. I was deeply moved to see the darling Eve sorrowing for her uncle's misfortune, and advanced and offered my whole services to her. With sudden anger she repulsed me, saying, with the natural unreason of woman visited by an unexpected shock of ill-fortune, that she believed me to be the cause of all the present trouble, adding, pettishly, that she deemed me impertinent for obtruding myself where I was not wanted.

Oh Heaven! what misery was mine to be thus upbraided. I strove to nerve myself to bear with show of magnanimity the unjust reproaches of my idol, and the trying regard of my masculine neighbours, and, while I succeeded in preserving an air of temperate self-control, I suffered as terribly as ever did

any proud, sensitive soul. I could not help thinking at this moment that the measure of my unhappiness was surely more than sufficient to meet the vindictive demands of Spinner upon me for good and all.

"Gentlemen," cried the Captain, with a deprecatory shrug of his Atlantian shoulders, and bearing himself with admirable *sang froid*, "we live in strange times. You see I am at present constrained to show in a form after the royal escutcheon, — flanked by an official lion and unicorn. No doubt, by-and-by I shall be pressed to take the part of leading man in a repetition of the judicial farce which was played with great success in the next room a few minutes ago."

The distressed maiden did not appreciate her uncle's playful sally, but continued in her sadness, and presently growing enraged, exclaimed, —"I believe this is all through Mr. Amor."

A woman in tears is always a moving sight, and powerfully so if the Niobe is of charming mould. Now that I beheld the lovely creature whom I absolutely worshipped in a state of extreme depression, with her sweet eyes shedding tears of woe upon the ground, the sad spectacle wrung my heart to a most painful degree.

"You are unkind, Miss Melrose," I returned, earnestly. "I assure you I am not to blame at all, and feel really sorry for you."

"Tut, tut!" ejaculated the bold Captain, in slight reprimand to his niece, as she continued to refuse with angry scorn all my respectful overtures of friendship; and then touching her in an affectionate manner, he bade her dry her tears and be comforted, for, declared he, after all said and done, there was really scarcely anything the matter.

The policemen, with feelings hardened to stolid indifference by familiarity with scenes of affliction, were already impatient at the hindrance to their business proceedings, and demanded that progression should be instantly resumed.

"You have to do now with gentlefolks," said the irrepressible Captain to the vulgar-minded police-agents, bestowing upon them a steady stare, which, in its concentrated power, was almost enough to have withered up the presumption of these men for ever. "Remember that, carefully."

Though the bold son of Bellona administered this rebuke to his unmannerly attendants with much pleasure to himself, yet he was evidently desirous of putting an end to the sentimental

episode cumbering his progress. Now, in a manner worthy of the most imperious dictator, he bade his captors lead the way.

"Au revoir!" cried he, airily, on moving onward, shaking his fingers in our direction, but without looking at us; and then the graceless fellow addressed some words to his sorrowing companion which provoked her to turn round and look at me with a changed air of relentful interest.

Spinner and my brother, while taking keen observation of the unhappy scene, had abstained from interfering in it by either word or deed. But though they were careful to keep their tongues from comment upon it, they had been very busy making grimaces at, and exchanging glances with, each other. Spinner looked upon the Captain as simply a blackguard, and disdained holding any communion whatever with that shady individual.

While he fully acknowledged that no stain existed on the reputation of the beautiful young actress, the mere fact of her relationship with the disreputable bully Captain caused her to appear, in his prejudiced eyes, disentitled to share in the high respect which is the privilege of virtuous woman.

I was now fuming in discontent at the un-

fair treatment to which I had been subjected, and was only too anxious to find an opportunity for pouring out my resentment upon the offenders.

"You are amused—you two," said I, coldly, with the desire of picking a quarrel. Happily for myself, my attention at this critical moment was again attracted to the Captain and his niece, who had halted at the end of the long passage, and were beckoning for me to approach.

"Your friends call you," said Spinner, unduly emphasizing the noun.

"His friends!" echoed my brother, in weak imitation of Spinner's manner.

I scornfully replied that I should account it a far higher honour to be entitled to call a lovely and virtuous woman my friend, than to claim a second edition of Daniel Lambert as my brother; and having thus eased my mind of a little of its resentful spite, I walked off to give my attention to the fair one who was now waiting for me.

My ebullition of temper served to raise my spirits, and reinstate me in boldness; and being thus heartened, I came up to my idol, when, to my agreeable surprise, she instantly extended her delicate hand to me, while a sweet smile illumined her features. She proceeded to say

that she was afraid she had acted unfairly towards me.

"You will forgive me, won't you?" she added, in a tone which, like some marvellous balm, soothed my wounded spirit instantaneously.

I answered only with an involuntary sob, while pressing the dear little hand offered for my grasp, and in the befooling joy of the moment I bowed down and kissed it.

"I am sorry I have vexed you," said the young beauty, with her eyes lit up with that splendid sparkle which comes of the self-consciousness of irresistible power.

"Say no more," I returned, with feelings made drunk with delight; "I remember nothing now with any pain."

The beautiful girl smiled benignly upon me when I had laid my homage again at her feet, and then, with the peculiar spirit of her sex, considering she had been unfair to me, she was lavish of her reconciliatory overtures.

"You must still be my dear friend," she said, in the fulness of her generosity; "indeed, for ever and ever."

"You know," I returned, with a twinge at my heart as I remembered the real state of things, "I cannot be otherwise."

"Look'ee here, young gentleman," cried the Captain. Here he paused, in order to pacify his two male companions, who had interrupted him with some very rude expostulations at the protracted delay; "look'ee here, you and I have not been able to hit it well together, and you have tried several times to upset me. But, I 'm Jack Melrose, and dam'me, there's my hand —though you don't deserve it." And so saying, Jack Melrose extended his mighty palm to me, in the full confidence, evidently, that I should hasten to grasp it.

This new action sobered down my mind in an instant, and my feelings grew inflamed to think that I should be so miserably estimated as to be expected to accept the offer of this vile man's hand, while I was aware of his abominable nature and dishonourable reputation.

I saw my divinity looking upon me now with eyes of appeal, and, though I desired to reject the proffer of her graceless uncle with words of disdain, the anxious look cast upon me by the too-loyal fair one disarmed me to such a degree that I could not utter a single word. Yet I so far observed my impulse as to refuse with silent contempt the unworthy hand now presented to me.

"Take it, man!" cried the unprincipled fel-

low, retaining his position, as though he were balancing something upon his grisly palm. "Take it, and agree to forget our little difference."

"I shall not take it," said I, emphatically. Then, very disdainfully, I gave him to understand that the difference existing between us need not be allowed to vex his mind, for, indeed, I bore him no great malice through it.

"It will serve to keep us asunder," I concluded, with an intentional touch of contempt in my voice. "I believe it is advisable in this matter, as in any other, indeed, to let well alone."

"What, sir!" roared the Captain, with affected indignant surprise, hastily withdrawing his ugly, rejected palm, while his truculent eye shot forth terrific gleams; "you refuse my hand—the hand which has borne your country's flag triumphantly through a thousand fields of peril? Wounds and blazes! sir, can't you see I am entitled to the respect that is owing to a gentleman?"

"I do not recognize your claim to the honour you arrogate to yourself," I answered, warmly.

"You are going beyond your privilege to so insult my dear uncle."

"It is your uncle who insults me," I replied, to the faithful niece; and, as I encountered her gaze, and noted the frown which had again visited her exquisite features, my heart sank within me.

"Why, Mr. Amor," said the irate young beauty, with sarcastic accents, curling her proud lips to the semblance of a roseate crescent moon, and veiling her azure eyes as in sleep, "you must surely think strangely on things to refuse my uncle's hand when it is offered you. You are not, I must tell you, entitled justly to equal respect with my uncle, for you have done nothing yet of any importance, whereas he has fought in many great battles for the sake of his country. You ought to feel, sir, ashamed of yourself for having insulted a brave, poor old soldier."

"Spoken," cried the unduly praised man of war, with blatant voice, "like the little trump it is!"

Having thus expressed his grateful emotion, the sorry fellow requested his fair companion to leave me now, to quote his own expression, "snubbed according to my deserts," when the impulsive girl, bestowing upon me the very stiffest nod possible, followed her leader out of the passage, banging the door behind her as a

final token that I now stood totally bereft of her favour.

I stood almost stupefied for a few moments, and, on looking back, beheld Spinner and my brother advancing upon me. Feeling that I was deprived of spirit to cope with them, I dashed hastily through the swinging door, when I was unfortunate enough to come rudely in collision with my good friend the rector. The reverend gentleman suffered greatly by the shock, and, with much heat, rated me for my inconsiderate conduct. I hastened, as in duty bound, to apologize for the harm I had committed inadvertently, when the dear good man pleasantly said that he almost believed I had designed to try the power of his physical endurance. Spinner and my brother now rejoined me, when Mr. Ellice proceeded to inform us that the ladies, accompanied by Hugh, had gone home, and that Miss Magnet, in her gratification at my triumphant delivery, had intimated her desire that all the members of our party should reassemble in her house to partake of luncheon, and receive, strange to relate, a small souvenir of the occasion.

"Est-il possible?" uttered Spinner, with sneering intonation, preferring to employ, with his usual adroitness, the French idiom for

his keen sarcasm, as it afforded a certain politeness which would have been wanting in his own vernacular.

I thought that he would not care to accept Miss Magnet's present invitation, as it promised to inflict upon him some annoyance; but, to my surprise, he consented to attend as requested.

My brother was only too glad to accept the old lady's invitation; and I make no doubt, judging from somewhat plain evidence, that the fat fellow derived the chief part of his present pleasure not so much from the expectation of shortly beholding his loadstar, as from the anticipation of a table of choice viands awaiting his onslaught.

When at length we were seated at Miss Magnet's hospitable board, the entertainment was found of such excellent and profuse description as to invite the opinion that it was no impromptu affair, but one of pre-design in the full sense of the term. Mr. Horneblende was present. He had attended the court with me. I have hitherto said nothing of him, for the very good reason of my having in effect nothing to say. Miss Magnet, apparently all the better for her late excitement, sat at the head of the table; and having me, by her own

desire, placed at her right hand, the generous old soul afforded me employment enough all through the feast in counteracting her attempts to induce me to eat and drink in the manner of a Hercules.

Emily was absent from the table on the plea of indisposition; and when apology was made for her, Miss Magnet, with a severely confiding air, remarked to me that her gentle favourite had gotten her illness all through the encounter she had had with, to use the old lady's term, my Jezebel.

On the conclusion of the repast, Spinner rose to make some remarks anent the "crowning mercy" of the day, as he chose to denominate my triumph; and his speech, high-flown as it was, might fitly be described as a pæan over the discomfiture of my enemies. He alluded to my uncle in outrageous terms, such as "Incarnation of Beelzebub," "Monster of Humanity," "Spirit of Tophet," &c.; and as I could not believe the orator sincere in the choice of his reviling epithets, I conjectured that he purposed gaining the favour of the old lady, though to what end was totally beyond my comprehension.

Miss Magnet was well pleased to hear my uncle abused in damnatory terms, and she

testified her approval by several acts of rapping on the floor with her supporting staff; yet the resolute old dame was annoyed to reflect that the vilification of the arch-enemy of our cause should have been reserved for this mildly circumstanced occasion.

"You are brave now, young gentleman," cried she to Spinner, with voice shrill with excitement. "But I'm thinking your boldness has come on just an hour too late."

"Madam," returned he, smiling, "I beg to remind you that it is always advisable to make sure of your victory ere you proceed to revile your enemy."

"Oh, for that matter," said the indomitable old lady, impatiently, "have at him tooth and nail at all times, say I."

A murmur of laughter ran round the table at the fierce sentiment pronounced by this relic of a past age. She was thereby provoked to launch an anathema upon the empty politeness which she declared had replaced the stern candour of former days.

"We certainly," remarked Mr. Ellice, gravely shaking his head, "are not as we ought to be."

This trite sentiment happily serving to allay the indignant wrath of the Ezekiel in petti-

coats, the good man went on to propose that my deliverance should be made the subject of thankful prayer.

I felt very sorry when the minister proceeded to carry his devout proposal into effect, for I was only too certain that, excepting the prayerful leader himself and the old lady, there was not one other person present who could find it in heart to feel thankful enough for the presumed Divine favour to make it a matter for worship to Heaven.

The reverent old dame followed every word of the devotional address, and in the fervency of her spirit repeated them all in perfectly audible tone; and when the solemn service came to an end, she uttered "Amen" with such startling precision, that each passive worshipper must inevitably have been moved to take note of the strange manner of the word rather than its dedication.

The warm-hearted hostess now retired to her own room, followed by the wondering respect of all her guests, the rector accompanying her to help her upstairs.

Spinner, immediately on the departure of the principals of our company, re-assumed his light, cynical air, which strangely contrasted with the grave, satirical style with which he

had treated his recent invective upon my uncle's character; and presently addressing himself to Mr. Horneblende, who had been observing a stiff reticence, he asked that ponderous individual whether he thought man was justified in offering prayer for specialities.

"Certainly," replied Mr. Horneblende, in apparent reproachful astonishment at the question.

Spinner, I could plainly perceive, was only seeking to annoy the heavy-souled solicitor; and now, evidently with the determination of indulging his wicked pleasure, casting himself down upon an easy chair, and assuming an attitude of abandoned ease—which in itself must have been offensive to the precise lawyer—he proceeded to remark that he could not but believe that Providence by this time must be vexed out of all patience by the constant importunity of man.

"Wicked man!" prompted Mr. Horneblende, with voice of stern reproof.

"That we all are," replied Spinner, bestowing a stare of rebuke upon his prompter; and then he went on to remark, "I have thought it may likely be that the higher powers regret having made man, to find him ever with words of selfish prayer on his lips. Heaven sees him

at one place prostrating himself before monstrously grotesque figures hewn or modelled by his own hands, calling upon them to suppress all phenomena of nature which he cannot himself understand; at anohter place grovelling on the ground, inside some charmed space cleared in a forest, or, mayhap, built in with fashioned clay or wood, addressing his earnest spirit to mythological dragons, or other fire-breathing images, praying them to put an end at once to all fierce beasts of the field, and to everything that is naturally stubborn of obedience to precious humanity; and again, at another place on his knees before symbols of invisible powers, or, perchance, relics of his own kind, supplicating them to unship the existent balance of nature. Now," concluded the cynic, with a short laugh, "does not all this sacred importunity appear likely only to vex high Heaven?"

"Sir," said Mr. Horneblende, with a frown, "you are, I think, contending that man should never pray at all." After consulting his watch in a hasty manner, as if he had been reminded of some engagement already due, he desired me to present his apology to the absent hostess, and took his leave, evidently with much relief to himself.

On Mr. Horneblende's departure, the young disciple of Juvenal, still retaining his indolent posture, addressed my brother, saying that he feared Mr. Horneblende was totally unable to take any other view than his own "lawyer one" upon the subject treated of.

"But he may be quite right in taking only that view of it," said Edward, who had himself doubtless taken hardly any view of the matter at all.

Spinner's eyes now rested with an amused twinkle upon the speaker, and after a short pause he curiously inquired of the blunt fellow what he was just thinking of.

"You want to know too much," returned the plain-spoken one.

"I can guess," playfully said Spinner, looking fixedly upon his friend's ingenuous countenance, as though it had been a page of suggestive hieroglyphical character.

"What is it?" asked Edward, with his cheeks extending far out with a smile, while his eyes opened to such an extent as to seem as if they needed only a sudden explosion of laughter to start clean out of their sockets.

Spinner motioned with his hand; whereupon my brother approached close to the diviner, and inclining his ear, caught some words up in

it which, like a magical essence, caused his face to become roseate as the typical countenance of a sun-god.

"No," he ejaculated, shaking his beaming head with an air of sheepishness; "no, no!"

Hugh Ellice, who was present in the room, and who up till now had observed an unusually discreet silence, was provoked to break through his restraint, upon seeing Spinner whisper to my brother, and impulsively cried out that he considered that the whispered secret ought properly to be imparted to all present. Edward answered, in curious metaphorical terms, that he thought the secret in question was like a snake in a hole, for it could do no harm while it was kept close.

"A very apt simile," commented Spinner, with a meaning nod and smile to my brother, "seeing that our secret is one which a particular charmer could at will compel forth."

"Tatchee-voo!" said Edward, with cautionary emphasis to his bantering familiar, with his face now deeply reddened.

I regretted that Hugh was here at this time, as he was naturally a blundering kind of boy, and when in playful humour was almost certain to confuse things in some way. Now the good-natured hobbledehoy, in the excess of his

desire for trifling merriment, cried out that he guessed the secret related to the question of my brother's softness for some particular girl, and that he should not rest until he was informed on the matter. But it was evident that while the inquisitive youth had stumbled upon the actual fact, he was perfectly unaware how near that fact lay to his personal sensitive interest.

Edward, with naturally dull apprehension, was, I could plainly see, convinced that the thoughtless youth had perfectly discovered his precious secret, and was inclined—heaven save the mark!—to make fun of it; and now the dull-minded fellow, being overcome with a pleasurable consternation, addressed a look to Spinner expressive of appeal for help in his difficulty.

I am certain that Spinner in his present action was grievously offending his own feelings, for, with a strange perversity of mind, designing now to give annoyance to me, he warmly encouraged my brother and Hugh to continue their unconscious mutual performance of what was, in the most egregious sense, a comedy of errors.

The brace of boobies fortunately were interrupted in their stupid bantering interchange by

the reappearance of the rector, ere they had arrived at a proper understanding of the question discussed between them. When now the play was at an end, I could hardly realize that indiscrimination of such an extreme kind as that I had been witness of had been possible in the reasonable world.

Mr. Ellice informed me quietly that I was wanted upstairs. But his present communication, though made almost in a whisper, was, I could discern, overheard by the lynx-like ear of Spinner; for, though he studiously avoided the least movement to betray his having surreptitiously learned of the summons now addressed to me, there suddenly appeared a tell-tale flush upon his countenance. I was able presently to perceive that he then in secret cursed the weakness of the flesh which had, craven-like, under a slight pressure revealed the secret so staunchly preserved by the more obdurate spirit.

It amused me to hear silly Hugh proposing to the young barrister that they should join in teasing Edward at further length.

I proceeded alone upstairs, and, on entering the private apartment of my patroness, I found the good old lady, to my great surprise, busily plying her spindle and distaff. As my

eyes rested on the odd, ancient figure, stooping to her quaint employment, with lean, small hands deftly spinning the fine thread, and the keen grey eyes staring at me in apparent supernatural penetration, I was struck fearfully with the conception that I was looking upon Atropos engaged in the mystic cast of my own life. I marvelled how it was that the strange spinning one, in stooping so far forward, could maintain her balance; but presently I discovered that a careful hand had wound a silken sash around her, and secured the ends to the arms of her chair. It was easy for me to surmise to whom that helpful hand belonged, for, sitting by the side of the aged spinner, was the gentle Emily, bearing in her deft fingers a small steel blade, causing her to appear in my startled sight as the sister Fate, whose duty it is to resolve the divination.

It was, indeed, a marvellous picture upon which I looked. Emily had combed out her hair, and the resplendent tresses, being pushed back over her shell-like ears, lay in a red-golden shower about her shoulders and down her back, enveloping the graceful form in a mantle which, in its gorgeousness, far exceeded the rarest triumph of warp and woof. Her face showed pale again as the rose of the House of

York, and the translucent green depths of her saintly eyes expressed a noble sadness, such as might be imagined to have appeared in those of the Madonna in the hours of her trial.

"Come in," said the old lady, sharply, as I stood in hesitation at the threshold, almost dismayed at the extraordinary sight now presented to me.

I suppose I must have seemed at this moment like a self-conscious criminal, for I approached my summoner with my eyes staring wildly, while my hands were so nervously affected, that I felt it a hard matter to keep them still.

"Why, I declare," cried the old lady, in pitiful accents, looking at me with keenly discerning eyes, "this foolish boy has the heart of a rabbit!"

I raised my head instantly on hearing these contemptuous words, and my heart swelled with returning courage. "Why have you called me?" I asked, speaking like the genius of Aladdin's ring.

The old dame, on hearing me speak thus impatiently, stared suspiciously into my flushed face, with the thought, I fear, that my sudden bravery was due to wine. The young maiden gazed also inquisitively at me; and now, feel-

ing ashamed of my rudeness, I stammered out an apology, which, I fear, could scarcely be accounted other than a sorry jumble.

"I am teaching my dear how to spin," quoth the quaint, aged one, gazing upon me with reassured look. Then she cheerfully bade me take a seat at her side, pleasantly promising she should teach me also how to spin.

I was very glad to accept her invitation, for though I valued the acquisition of the art of hand-spinning in these days of steam machinery as I would the practical acquaintance with the *modus operandi* of type-cutting as practised by Caxton and his coadjutors, I regarded my present opportunity as a timely one, to enable me to regain my composure.

I soon discovered, with but small disappointment, that it was not meant that I should have much pains devoted to my education in the art of making linen after the manner practised by the ladies forming the household of the late Priam, King of Troy; for, after a mere bagatelle of the raw lint of the distaff had been converted before my regardful eyes, my tutor ceased her interesting labour, and devoted her whole attention to speak with me.

"Emily and I," said the venerable one, in

accents of mingled censure and friendly regard, "have been talking over your late doings, and we agree that you have much reason to feel ashamed of yourself."

"Aunt!" cried the young maiden, with voice of offended surprise, "I am sure I never made any such remark."

"Well, well, my dear," returned Miss Magnet, affectionately laying her hand upon the lap of her favourite, "though you did not just say that, you surely said something to the same purpose."

Emily's face became suffused with a tint exquisite as that of the wild rose, and in her agitation she glanced aside to discover if I were observing her, when, finding her fears in that respect confirmed, she was almost overwhelmed in a pretty confusion. The resolute old dame, seeing her dear companion in a nervous state of distress, immediately grew angry with me, and cried out,—"Surely you are a mere stick of a man, to sit staring a girl out of countenance, without saying a word to her."

Being thus challenged, I was, of course, bound to address myself to try and recompose the agitated fair one, and I hastened to say that while I felt deeply grateful for her amiable refusal to join with Miss Magnet in severely

censuring me, I was obliged conscientiously to admit that there existed only too sufficient grounds to have warranted her in voting my total excommunication.

"Now give me a certain promise, and prove you are sincere," said the old lady, abruptly. "Promise me you will give up the dancing-girl."

I was almost tempted to laugh bitterly, to think that I was now entreated to give up a particular girl, when the fact was that she had already given me up, or rather had, to state the exact truth in a homely phrase, refused to have anything to do with me. I was, however, far too proud to give a specious promise in regard to what had been, and was even now, a religion with me. I felt unwilling to explain either how matters stood in relation to my grand passion, and I simply answered that I could not give the promise requested of me.

"I still love the girl, Eve Melrose," I said, dejectedly, looking out upon the bright day, with a gnawing pain at my heart. "I must confess that I have no thought whatever but what is in some way connected with that girl. But while I love her devotedly, I know, for certain, that she does not respond to my love;

and yet, knowing so much, I am—well, a fool, in spite of myself."

"But you must not continue to be a fool."

"I feel I have no power to alter that."

The old lady looked long and compassionately at me, and then shook her head gently up and down, with retrospective air. "It is a pity," she murmured, with sad, abstracted voice. "It will want time."

Feeling that my presence here was no longer desirable, I rose now from my chair, asking my hostess for permission to retire; but the obstinate old lady lent me a deaf ear, and presently, with a gesture of impatience, signed me down again to my seat.

"That fair-faced dancing thing has no heart—don't you see?" she presently cried, in a curious questioning tone desiring no answer. Then her dreamful expression changed to one almost of fierceness, as she turned abruptly to me, and remarked,—"She only wants to marry money—the heartless young jade! But I'll take care she gets no chance to marry mine."

"Yours!" I cried, in astonishment.

"A plague upon you, Frank Amor!" she uttered, passionately. "I declare your silly

conduct has quite upset the peace of all your friends."

I could not divine the immediate cause of my hostess's sudden ebullition of temper, and so, feeling myself unable to conciliate her, I sat still, believing that words were better spared in my present unsatisfactory position. The impulsive old lady rated me in general terms, until she was fairly out of breath, and after a pause, when she had partly recovered her strength, she went on in a changed, regretful strain, to explain to me that Emily had determined upon giving up the greater part of her time to the care of the sick poor. "Aye, aye," concluded the aged one, shaking her head in a strongly objective manner, "our dear Emily has, it is true, done the like before, but it is my decided wish that she should never again take upon herself the office of a paupers' nurse. Now, I desire you, sir, to help me in advising her against the thing."

The high-souled maiden sat with her brows slightly contracted with vexation, at being thus opposed in her holy resolve; and, as she sat upright in her chair, her fine features showed splendidly under the direct sunbeams, and her rich hair, then lying loose about her shoulders, afforded by its deep-red gold tint a

sharply defined outline to her classic face and neck.

I was struck now to note the resemblance which this beautiful girl bore to an admirable picture of a Madonna, done by the master-hand of Perugino, which I had seen in our National Gallery. I felt myself unworthy to sit in company with her, and I turned to my old friend, saying that I could not presume so far as to offer advice in the matter submitted to my notice.

"Hoighty-toighty!" exclaimed Miss Magnet, with slightly contemptuous voice. "Save us all, but we have come to a sad pass nowadays, that the pick of the young women are taking to nurse-service, and the young gallants are timid to open their mouths."

Emily looked imploringly at the old lady, and requested her to discontinue her present subject, and open at once her question, on which she had summoned me to her presence. "Why should you trouble Frank on my account?" concluded the maiden, with a charming blush again overspreading her features. "You know he has too many affairs of his own to think of, to be able to spare any consideration to mine."

"I'll teach him better, I promise you,"

cried Miss Magnet, facing round upon me in a very threatening manner, "if he confesses to that."

"Emily," said I, sorry to find the young maiden so hasty in her conclusions, "does my courtesy but scant justice."

"Tuts, man!" returned the old lady, impatiently, with a curious upward twist of her mouth. "Have done with your fine speeches, and say your say in honest English."

Emily cast her eyes downward, and folded her hands placidly in front of her, looking now the *beau idéal* of a saint; and when I recalled to memory the figure of my worldly loadstar, and placed her side by side with this chastening image, they composed together a fitting presentment of the two grand geniuses of human destiny.

I spoke out boldly, avowing that, while I with my whole heart honoured a needy woman, who strove, in the face of the miserable difficulties besetting such a one's straight path in the world, to earn her livelihood honestly, I yet attributed a higher respect to those others who, without being in the least necessitated, exposed themselves to insidious risk of health or life, to accept a grievous labour, all for the sake of suffering humanity. "Emily," con-

cluded I, with almost a reverently admiring spirit, "in her present resolve, is surely engaging herself in the direct service of Heaven itself."

"It's to be hoped," remarked my old friend, dryly, "you will now act likewise."

A short pause of silence succeeded, during which we each sat absorbed in anxious thought, and then the old lady lifted up her eyes, and looking at me with severe expression, proceeded to say,—"And now about yourself."

"Myself?" echoed I, startled from the contemplation of my good genius.

"Yourself—yes," said the old lady, ill-temperedly. "You, of all men, should know what that word means."

"Aunt!" ejaculated Emily, with monitory voice.

I knew I was bound with Promethean fetters to my enslaving fate, and I could not even hope ever to escape from it. "You know," said I, weakly endeavouring to evade the question, "I am not failing to continue my studies."

"That's very well," uttered my old friend, with significant emphasis. "But I want you to promise to strive with all your might to be obedient to your duty."

"I know what you would ask of me," said I, in desperation.

"Well, sir, what then?" returned my old friend, with a certain pitiful tenderness in her accents. Then shifting her gaze to look upon her gentle darling, she mechanically lifted the nearest hand of the sweet girl, and retained it in her own.

"Give me further time," I cried, with the unhappy idea that after a few days my misery would, doubtless, be confirmed, and that then I might find it a matter of indifference which way I should follow.

"Man alive!" said the old lady, with admonishing voice. "I warn you to do without delay what you see to be right."

"I can promise nothing—yet," I cried, positively in torture with abasement, and the sense of my total helplessness in the matter secretly aimed at. I turned my face away to conceal from my gentle companions the show of my violent emotion.

"Speak to him, Emily dear," murmured the old lady, below her breath. "Speak to him now."

"Oh, I cannot!" exclaimed the young maiden, with sudden vehemence. Then she rose hastily from her seat, and moved to the

door; but was not able to get out of sight ere she gave way to violent sobbing, as though her heart was breaking.

I sprang from my chair, and would have followed her; but I was restrained by the command of Miss Magnet, bidding me stay. I watched the retreating Niobe with sorrow and surprise.

"Let me go to her!" I cried, in appeal to my restraining companion, with my whole soul moved in tender admiration.

"Stay where you are, sir," sternly replied the aged one. "Would you kill her outright?"

"Kill her," I inquired, in blank wonder. "How should I kill her?"

"Don't you know?"

"No."

"God help the man!" uttered my old friend, nodding her head with a pitiful air. Then, with sudden promptitude, she touched my arm, and bade me ring the bell to summon the rector.

I obeyed, and presently the reverend gentleman made his appearance; when, after a few preliminary courtesies, I was once more put to the rack.

The good man took the chair lately occupied by his daughter, and I resumed my own.

The old lady then stated that I had not yet given the particular promise requested of me, and thereupon her new ally assumed the office of chief inquisitor.

"Frank Amor," said he, solemnly, "remember you are now violating in effect the fifth commandment." And then he went on to say that my conduct in refusing to give the promise in question was tantamount to contempt of my late parents' memory.

Now this homily of the minister's was, I considered, at once strained and unkind. It took me completely by surprise, and at a disadvantage; for I dared not, in common respect, say a word in protest when the memory of my parents was used to influence me to a pitiful subjection.

"You must see you are acting wrongly?" continued the rector, looking inquiringly into my face, and determining, I have no doubt, that my silence was proof of my assent to his views.

"I would not be too hard upon him, minister," said the warm-hearted old lady.

I looked up grateful to her, and my feelings so overcame me at this moment that I nervously seized her hand, and carrying, it to my dry lips, scalded it with a tear of anguish.

An instant change came over the face of my good old friend when my eye distilled its drop of sorrow upon her hand, and now the utmost tenderness pervaded her every feature. She spread out her withered arms towards me, while her dear old face carried a look upon it which I shall never forget.

"Kiss me—poor boy!" she cried, with plaintive, yearning tone.

I bent down, and touched her forehead with my lips; when she wound her arms with an almost convulsive clutch about me, and straining me to her bosom, gave way, like her gentle favourite, to a spasm of sobbing—especially painful to witness, because unattended by tears.

This was indeed a terrible moment for me. My feelings were so violently moved that I could not utter a single word to allay the transport of the poor loving soul. Now, in her sudden passionate state of being, she presented an utter contrast to her former self, as hitherto she had displayed herself as strict of disposition, if not somewhat stern, while at this moment she was weak, clinging, and altogether feminine. I disengaged myself with all gentleness from her nervous embrace; when, keeping her eyes fixed upon me with yearning

expression, she muttered unconsciously some words of affection towards me.

The rector now gently requested me to retire downstairs, and as I was proceeding in obedience to his order, and had turned round to close the door upon myself in the staircase, my eyes encountered once more the earnest gaze of the impulsive old lady, when she signalled adieu to me with her whole heart in the action.

I kissed my hand back to her, and then ran downstairs with the memory of my dear old friend's affectionate regard in my heart promising to be a solace to me for ever.

I found Hugh alone in the dining-room, and he informed me that the other guests had all taken their leave. The simple fellow was delighted to have my companionship entirely to himself, and, being now very gleeful of mood, he so vexed my ears with his tittle-tattle, that I at length was driven to tell him plainly that I could bear it patiently no longer.

A rebuff had always a sensible effect on Hugh, only he was never long affected with depression by it. My present check caused him to be silent for the space of some three or four minutes; when, recovering his wonted spirits, he went on again with his idle chatter

even more briskly than before. Being now driven almost to positive desperation, I fled incontinently out of the house, pausing for just a moment to leave my apology with the servant to present to the rector.

I hastily wended my steps down to the river at Chelsea, and hired a boatman to row me up to Richmond, the tide being favourable. I believed that my mind would become composed by this process, as there was present in it a change of scene, a change of motion, and a change, to a certain extent, of atmosphere. I had hoped there would be, too, a total change of company; but in that hope I was doomed to sad disappointment, as I had not gone far on the river when whom should I espy a few yards ahead but Spinner, with my brother, in a big, lumbering boat. They had with them a man who was working the oars. My brother was managing the rudder, while Spinner appeared doing nothing in particular. The idle one detected my presence just as I had gained alongside of him, when he started up hastily, and called Edward's attention to me.

It was an easy matter for my man to move quickly in advance of the rival craft, and, when he had gained me the advantage of being able to contemplate a comparatively clear stream, I

heard my brother's voice shouting to his oarsman to put on a spurt. A wicked spirit seized me at this time, and I stood up, and addressed a series of taunts to the anxious crew in my wake. Spinner, at my brother's exhortation, attempted, with his usual arbitrariness, to seize the sculls from the hands of his man, and that individual stoutly resisting the uncivil proceeding, the boat meanwhile drifted in to the bank.

I left the craft sticking in the mud, with its crew wrangling fiercely together. Happily, I saw them no more that day.

I soon began to feel that I was deriving much benefit from the natural medicine I had prescribed for myself. I went as far up as Richmond, and, landing there, took dinner, and then returned home, feeling greatly the better for my little indulgence. Shortly after my return to Miss Magnet's hospitable abode, I learned that the rector and his daughter had gone back to the Parsonage, and that Mrs. Ellice had resumed the care of the old lady. I was now even glad to learn that my enemy was here again, as I had feared to meet the old lady without the repressive presence of her niece.

CHAPTER IX.

I REMAINED in Miss Magnet's house for three days following the one of my affair in the court of justice, without attempting to ascertain anything concerning the movements of my enchantress; but, while I thus exercised the virtue of self-control, I suffered such pangs of impatient longing, as to unfit me to make good use of my time. I endeavoured to bend my inclinations to the united particular desire of my friends as far as my nature would allow, and I subjected myself dutifully to a purgatory of three days' duration. I attended my college, and on the way there and back always avoided the thoroughfares in which it was likely I should run against the enchanting stage-girl. My dutifulness, to be judged by the sacrifice it cost, must have gone far, I should think, to help the balance of my saving deeds.

The fourth day dawned, and brought with it a note to me, alas! from the living cause of all my terrible pangs. Heaven forgive me! I tore open the envelope with the frantic eager-

ness of a poor soul who, travelling parched and weary through a desert, suddenly stumbles upon a well, and uncovers it, praying there may be found water in it to refresh his being.

"Dear Mr. Amor," were the opening words of the epistle; and then followed the brief instructions,—"Come and see me this afternoon at Antonia Cottage, not later than half-past four o'clock." The concluding terms seemed as a mockery of courtesy considered with recent events,—"And oblige yours faithfully, Eve Melrose."

"I won't!" I cried, with clenched teeth, when I had read this invitation from my evil fate, and, in the ill-omened spasm of the moment, I cast the missive of temptation down upon the ground, and stamped my foot upon it. Oh, poor fool that I was! I let the scorned note lie under foot for only a few seconds, and then I picked it up and placed it mechanically in my breast-pocket.

It had been my duty for these past three days, at the particular request of the hostess, to go upstairs each morning after breakfast, and each evening after dinner, to pay my respects to her, but on this eventful morning I felt desirous of evading my courteous duty. An uneasy consciousness lay, as it seemed, at the

core of my heart, making me feel that I could no more refuse obedience to the little message of my siren than I could resist turning to the light if I were shut up in a dark place.

I was duly ordered to make my appearance upstairs, and as, in submission to the command laid upon me, I entered the room wherein the two ladies sat, the shrewd eyes of the younger at once detected that something was amiss with me, and, with her customary harshness, she charged me to say what was heavy on my mind.

I was stung by her tone of unkind authority, and, on the spur of the moment, answered that there was nothing on my mind to call for a confession. No sooner had the deceitful words escaped my mouth, than I felt my heart sink under the miserable knowledge that I stood now committed to depend entirely upon my own counsel as to how I should conduct myself in the near approaching hour of my final trial.

Mrs. Ellice was confessedly a woman who would not, to use her own terms, stand any nonsense.

"I hope," said she, with a most uncharitable sneer, after I had presented my respects to her aunt and her—"I hope you have entirely given up acquaintance with the stage person."

In the warmth of my feelings I plainly declared that, although lately I had refrained from seeking the young lady in reference, my respect and admiration for her stood undiminished in the least, and that, so far from my friendly relations with her being yet broken off, I was in recent receipt of a civil note from her own hand.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed my enemy, holding up her palms, and directing a glance at her aunt. "Why, I was supposing you had turned over a new leaf. Now, sir," she added, severely, "I think the least you can do, to prove your gratitude, is to show aunt the note."

I answered that the note in question had caused me surprise, and that while I was well aware that the affronting request now made me was really intended to serve in another direction than the one attached to it, I yet was willing to reveal the substance of the note, which was simply an invitation for me to call upon the writer.

"Shall you then accept it?" inquired my foe, with the air of one who has compelled an unwilling confession.

"That," I answered, raising myself on tiptoe in the sudden vehemence of my indignation, "I decline to say."

"Do you hear that, dear?" cried my persecutor, exultingly, to her aunt.

"What?" said the old lady.

"Why, what he has just said."

"Aye," replied the good old soul, with curious intonation, "I heard what he has said, and I heard what you have said; and I'm thinking you, Emily, are just spoiling all."

"Heaven bless you, madam!" I uttered, with choking accents; "for you, and such as you, make life both pleasant and good."

The dear lady looked upon me with eyes of loving kindness, and, taking my hand, held it fondly within her own, and then anxiously asked me if I intended to accept the invitation of my correspondent.

"I think I shall," I returned, excited by kindness to make the confession which harshness had failed to compel.

"That is certain, I think," remarked the severe one, passing over to a table.

I had it on my lips to resent this rudeness; but I thought better of my intention in time, and remained silent.

"You won't allow yourself, I trust," said my friend, with a beseeching gaze into my face, "to be ruled by the artful young player person."

"You altogether mistake her, dear madam," said I, with an attempt to smile; "she has, indeed, no wish to rule me."

"Aye, aye, but I don't mistake you. Your flame is a young woman accustomed to a public stage."

"Well, aunt," remarked the represser, with ominous accents, and still keeping her back turned to us, "now that you have encouraged your *protégé* to accept the lure of the Circe, you will surely find by-and-by that you have made a mistake."

Miss Magnet gazed wistfully into my eyes, on hearing the words of the Cassandra, and addressed to me an affectionate caution, bidding me try and forego my intended visit.

I knew that the good old lady was advising me to my own certain advantage, and I yearned to be able to return some comfort to her faithful heart; but I sadly perceived that what was alone capable of comforting her I could not yet give in pure form, and I abhorred the thought of practising any deceit upon her.

"I am not yet strong enough," I replied, "to do as you desire of me."

Mrs. Ellice, who was arranging some things in the room, laughed mockingly on hearing my heart-wrung confession. I raised my head

angrily, and was about to reproach her, when my intention was arrested by the old lady, who put up her hand commanding my silence. Then she dismissed me, telling me to go about my duties of the day.

"Bear in mind," she concluded, "that in overcoming your temptations you will not only reap advantage for yourself, but also make glad the hearts of your friends."

My mind was on tenter-hooks during the hours of my attendance that day at college. The careless, buoyant conversation of my fellow-students jarred upon my feelings, as the hum of every-day life would grate upon the ear of some unfortunate stretched upon the rack.

At weary length the eagerly wished-for hour arrived, releasing me from work; and now I went, with a fast-beating heart, upon my way to see the fair one at whose discretion lay my destiny. Never, in that Grecian era when mystic oracles kept watch in their temples, has curious mortal approached the god-inhabited fane with greater awe than I experienced when drawing near to the place where I expected to hear words powerful enough to move my heart to its core. I called myself a fool over and over again, and yet I felt that my conduct was

not strictly that of foolishness; for, indeed, I was drawn to the object of my attraction by deprivation of the powers of resistance as completely as the poor wretch coming within the circling eddies of the Maelstrom.

"Now!" said I, with a spasmodic gasp, as at length I plunged into the vortex, and presently stood face to face with my beautiful young goddess.

"I am glad to see you," said she, with a slight smile of triumph on her lips, as she offered her hand to me. "Pray sit down."

I sat down; but immediately rose again to my feet to pay due respect to the little Frenchwoman, who now entered the room.

"Ah!" cried the irrepressible daughter of Gaul, advancing towards me with both her hands outstretched, "mon ami, I am rey-joiced zat I should again see you."

I murmured my thanks, and, after a few courteous civilities had passed between us, the lively little woman seated herself, and I did likewise. The maiden then proceeded to say that she had asked me to come there in order that she might freely discuss with me the case of her uncle.

"Indeed!" I uttered, by way of comment upon the sad case of the wicked uncle; but I

disdained to say a single word in his favour.

"It is a monstrous shame!" cried the faithful niece, obstinately unwilling, no doubt, to admit that the action of the legal authorities in this particular instance was justified in the slightest degree.

"Monstrous shame!" repeated the Frenchwoman, shaking her head in a rapid manner, and making a clacking noise with her tongue. But, despite her animated testimony in favour of her daughter's sentiment, the tone of her voice was certainly not that of deeply felt indignation.

I inquired if the Captain were charged with having taken my uncle's diamond, and the fair one answered it was not that particular diamond, but some other one.

"A great many," cried the vivacious little woman, amending the explanation; and which explanatory statement induced me to consider the Captain a thief extraordinary.

It transpired, in the course of the conversation which followed upon the foregoing remarks, that the Captain, while now in detention under a charge of a robbery of jewels which took place somewhere about two years before this date, was suspected also of participation

in the similar affair happening in my uncle's house. I shrewdly conjectured that the later robbery had provoked a revival of activity in tracing the agents of the first.

I was quite unable to imagine what could have caused me to be accounted of promise in the formidable task of procuring the release of the disreputable scamp from the grip of the law; and it afforded me a little insight into the natural cunning of woman when, in answer to my wondering inquiry, I was at length informed that the part which I was expected to play in this matter was only the subordinate one of inciter to another man, that man being, strange to relate, no other than James Spinner.

"I have asked your friend here at five o'clock," concluded my siren, to my very disagreeable surprise and cruel enlightenment.

Now what reason existed for selecting Spinner to act in this shady business I could not fathom; but the motive in inviting me here half an hour in advance of my presumed friend was only too easy for me to comprehend.

"Will he come?" I inquired, now abhorring my present situation.

"Of course he will," answered the maiden, in evident surprise at my question. She went to the window, and, looking out, presently re-

marked with great candour,—"I am, though, not quite so sure of him as I was of you."

"He is a gentleman, and he shall come, no fear," cried the mother.

I certainly hoped with my whole heart that Spinner would not fulfil the expectations of my present companions, and my hopes in that direction were strengthened by my knowledge that the hour named for his visit was already past. I felt naturally anxious to hear if my uncle had any share in this dubious transaction; but I was doomed to endure the misery of suspense, as no information was volunteered on the subject, and I would not condescend to ask for it.

My fair enchantress, provoked, no doubt, by my question, hovered about the room in a restless state of uncertainty, alternating between sanguine hope and doubting anxiety; at one moment gazing anxiously out of the window, and at another addressing conversation to her mother and me which required no answer, she fidgeted about.

The room was but meagrely furnished; and from the fact of my having been in it once before, I was able to observe plain evidence of its poverty having deepened since my former visit.

The old looking-glass was no longer there, and I could not help thinking that it must have been sold to meet the necessities of the household. Now, this conception, so far from distressing me, as it would have done under ordinary circumstances, afforded me a positive delight, for it went to prove that the two poor ladies, while no doubt having been given the offer of assistance from my uncle, were yet inspired with the honourable determination to depend entirely upon their own resources.

The young actress appeared to my sight more superbly beautiful than ever, and her charms were, I think, enhanced by her immediate surroundings, the dingy apartment and its faded furniture. I was, however, pained in my heart to reflect that this exquisite girl had so far allowed her baser instincts to have supremacy as to consent to marry a sickly old man for the sake of his wealth.

Her movements were characterized by a remarkable grace—acquired possibly from her professional practices—and now, as she moved impatiently here and there in the room, assuming various attitudes, she perfectly bewitched my admiring sight.

I could plainly perceive she had been so accustomed to receive slavish attention, as to

be confirmed in the opinion that her word was law; and now that she was beginning to fear Spinner's non-acceptance of her invitation, she appeared almost astounded at his apparent indifference.

"Monsieur Spinner," remarked the little Frenchwoman, observing her daughter looking out of the window, now for the twentieth time at the least, "il est tard."

"I fear," said I, inwardly satisfied, "Mr. Spinner will not come at all."

"Won't he though?" cried the young actress, pointing triumphantly with her finger towards the garden-gate. "Why, there he is!"

Sure enough there was Spinner standing in the pathway, gazing about him as though in doubt whether he had rightly hit upon his destination.

The fair Eve, on her first impulse of gratification, ran across the room to open the front door for the welcome new-comer; but, immediately recovering her natural haughtiness, she stopped half-way, and bade her mother go and receive the tardy visitor.

On his entrance, Spinner started with surprise at meeting me here. He was on the instant, I could perceive, suspicious of his strange invitation. I bowed to him, and

hastened to state that I was here on the same terms precisely as he; whereupon, with abrupt, if not even uncivil, manner, he asked to be told quickly the reason for calling him to this house.

"I shall explain that, sir," answered the proud young beauty, with a grand sweep of her disdainful eyes, "in my own time."

The scornful answer took Spinner completely by surprise. He looked back upon the arrogant fair one for a few moments in angry astonishment; but, as she continued to stare at him with an expression such as might have worthily sat upon the countenance of the insulted Queen of the Iceni, he presently bowed his head in compelled homage, and then declared his willingness to submit to the convenience of the exacting fair one.

END OF VOL. II.

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